

IN A RING OF FIRE



IVAN OVCHARENKO



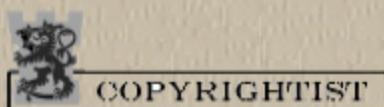
IN A RING OF FIRE MEMORIES OF A PARTISAN



BY IVAN VASILEVICH OVCHARENKO
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To the Young Communist League of the Crimea, to the Red partisans, to the heroes whose bones are moldering in the steppe, in the forest, and in the rocky gorges of the Crimea — this book is dedicated.

- Ivan Ovcharenko

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MAPS





PLATES



Lighthouse: Eltinguensk / Yeni Kale (?)

IN A RING OF FIRE

IN THE KUBAN

IN THE autumn of 1918 was without the usual laughter and gay voices of youths and maidens. The fields waited in vain for the harvest to be gathered.

Kornilov had rushed in from the Don. The rich Cossacks rose against the Soviets and blood flowed in streams. The heroic efforts of Red Guard detachments were unavailing against the enemy's better armament. Wild Cossacks scoured the country, looking for Bolsheviks. The villages of the Taman peninsula were set with gallows from which the corpses of innocent people swung.

A group of us revolutionary soldiers and sailors were tramping through the plains. It was evening. There had been rain; the air was raw and a bitter wind blew.

Tired and with aching limbs, we huddled together for warmth in a shallow bush-hidden ditch. Hunted from all sides by the Whites we must escape or perish. We dared not go into the towns or villages and it was becoming dangerous to stay on the plains.

Escape! But where? ...

"We must head for Novorossisk," said Pankratyev, a handsome, blue-eyed sailor, devoted heart and soul to the revolution. "Maybe we'll find some of our fellows there. They'll not surrender the town so easily!"

"You and your sailors!" said an old cavalry soldier scornfully. "Didn't they sink the fleet? Good fighters, indeed!"

"They sunk it because they had to," answered Pankratyev with heat. "Must have got the order to do it. Sea folk are a tough tribe. I'm sure they hold Novorossisk!"

"If they couldn't keep their ships," the soldier retorted, "there's small hope they could hold the town."

Their argument broadened into a general discussion of our plight and how to get out of it. Many plans were offered. Eventually we decided to steal a fishing boat and go through Kerch to the Crimea, thence to the Ukraine and Russia.

The night was dark. We could see the colored lamps of the lighthouses on the Crimean shore, the lights of ships going through the straits. At eleven o'clock we crept noiselessly to the edge of the steep bank, climbed into a boat and pushed off.

When we had rounded the Eltinguensk lighthouse, we were full of hope.

The shores were lost to sight. Black night surrounded us. The wind gathered force, making our sails creak. The sea began to rise, touched with white crests which gleamed in the dark. Water splashed overboard and big waves lifted the boat until it hung almost on its beam ends. Pankratyev, at the helm, pressed on the tiller with all his strength. The rest of us sat together silently, outwardly calm but with every nerve taut. Our one desire was to reach shore as soon as it might be possible.

"A light to the left," Pankratyev suddenly cried, steering to keep out of the neighborhood of the approaching steamer.

Our hearts leaped.

"That light's coming towards us," someone murmured.

"It must be a coastguard steamer."

The wind grew stronger and soaked us with spray.

Happily, the light passed in the direction of Kerch; they hadn't noticed us.

When dawn broke we were near the Crimean shore. We landed eventually near Eltinguen village and scattered. Pankratyev and I went to Kerch.

KERCH

Morning and a pale orange sky with a drift of gray clouds. The horizon dark and threatening. Cutters, barges, schooners and motor boats glided between Kerch and Taman. Some of them carried prisoners — Red Guards, Bolsheviks — to Taman, where they filled the prison and fortress. Other vessels were crowded with the retreating German army. The town was full of hooting automobile horns, the clank of iron, men shouting, horses neighing, the rumble of carts, the galloping of horses on the pavement. The German cavalry, a serried column, rode sombrely through the town, the clackety-clack of their iron hoofs burdening the morning air. Their infantry marched in ranks, heavy and coarse, with the measured crunch-crunch of the men's nailed boots. The inhabitants gazed at them, fascinated. Every German soldier had his neck and hands bandaged — the result of the hardy Kuban mosquitoes and midges.

The infantry was followed by artillery. The black muzzles of the guns were covered, making them look like ordinary pieces of machinery. German lieutenants rushed about the town. Russian whiteguards, officers and men who had come from the Kuban to consolidate the "unified and indivisible" power of the generals and bourgeoisie, slunk among the German officers.

Red prisoners were continually disembarking at the quays. Whenever a steamer or cutter approached the shore, women, children and old people ran out from everywhere and found their sons, husbands, brothers among the prisoners. The women wept and tried to force their way to their relatives, but the guards stopped them.

The Mitridat mountain towered indifferently above the human beehive. In the middle of the strait lay the English, French and whiteguard ships, cruisers, submarines, torpedo boats, like enormous gray beasts of the sea, ready, at any moment, to break their heavy chains and swallow up the town. Their sirens continually exchanged anxious signals.

At a distance, the once impregnable Kerch fortress stood against the horizon, jutting into the sea, with its cape and long jetty.

The fortress was the site of mass executions.

Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries held meetings in all parts of the town, setting the people against the Bolsheviks.

"Don't you see what these Bolsheviks, these German spies, have done? For German money they have turned Russia into a sea of blood"

Someone shouted in the crowd.

"Liar! It's you Who sell yourself to the Germans and white guards!"

The orator, taken aback, finished his speech by pointing at the crowd and saying:

"That fellow who shouted just now is a Bolshevik and a German spy."

In these stormy days, while mass executions were of frequent occurrence, while the fortresses and other prisons overflowed with prisoners, a secret Bolshevik organization was formed in Kerch to carry on the fight against the new rulers. They armed and prepared the revolutionary masses for a revolt in favor of the Soviets. Those who believed in the restoration of the Soviet regime then were few. Many thought the revolution was suppressed.

The Germans left Kerch in November 1918. The Constitutional-Democrats came to power, supported by the French and English forces. The new government set out to repress the revolution in the crudest way. Mass executions were perpetrated openly. Thousands were murdered. Kerch and the whole Taman peninsula ran with the blood of our fighters. But these atrocious crimes also showed the working masses the nature of the bourgeois and landlords' regime and moved them to armed revolt. Meanwhile the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries developed their work.

The Bolsheviks were also busy.

Proclamations, posters, slogans calling men to arms, appeared everywhere. The small individual bolshevik groups began to join the basic organizations — the Party nuclei.

Soon, the organization called a congress with representatives from twenty-three villages. This congress elected a revolutionary military staff to make preparations for an armed revolt. Its activity was soon felt in the district when it began to organize and train detachments of partisans.

One day the watchman on duty at Kuz-Aul lighthouse came to see me. His name was Slessarenko. He told me that a number of Bolsheviks had escaped from the prisons of the White secret service. He also said he was the representative of a detachment of partisans commanded by Vassily Denissov, that he was recruiting men for that detachment and searching for arms to send to them. I looked at him with suspicion.

"Are you serious, or just kidding me?"

"Oh! You don't see any further than your nose," he retorted.

I wondered who he might be. There were rumors that the Denissov brothers had escaped after killing two police spies in Feodossya.

I made objections.

"You say there's a big detachment down in the stone quarries? I have not heard of anything they've done, yet."

"The detachment is only just forming," said Slessarenko severely. "It is isolated. They are preparing for an attack."

"How many of them are there?"

"I can't say. There's a lot of these underground passages, you know. But you can go yourself to see Denissov at the quarry and talk to him about the work you'll do. You know him better than I do."

When I agreed, he added:

"I've got two boys here, in hiding. They're sailors. I'll bring them here and you'll take them along with you to the quarry. I'll give you the password. Don't you go out. I'll be back in a couple of hours."

He went off and was back within the two hours. He brought two comrades whom he handed over to me, saying:

"Do all that's necessary as quickly as you can. Collect your arms and cartridges and go there. Go at night. It's not so dangerous then. And try to leave no traces...."

The comrades and I resolved to go to the quarry.

We set forth at night taking with us some zinc, cartridges, two rifles and a revolver each.

ON THE WAY

February 1919. Spring was in the air when, just before dawn, we climbed to the top of a long range of hills which ran from the fortress cape.

Approaching the quarry, we clambered to the top of a mound from which we could see the entrances into the workings, yawning black.

The night wind carried the acrid tang of burning manure which serves as fuel in the huts of Stary-Karantin village, which lay a little way off. We could hear the crowing of cocks, the screams of geese and ducks, voices on the beach shouting "One, two — push!" as the fishermen put out in their boats.

Spirals of smoke rose above some of the tunnels, coming from the caves in which the workmen and their families lived.

"They are comfortable at least," someone sighed. "These caves must be warm and sheltered."

Presently we saw a man approaching. When he came near I called to him.

"Halt!"

The man stopped. He was of medium height and wore an old coat and a cap with strands of hay sticking to it; he held a whip in his hands and his feet were wrapped in rags tied with string.

"Where do you come from?" I asked him.

"From the rock over yonder."

"Which rock?"

"The town rock."

"And what are you doing here so early?"

"I live here. There, where you see the smoke coming out, that's my home," he said, pointing to one of the tunnels. "Sakharov lives down there and Kiryanov over there," and he pointed to other spots where more smoke was rising.

"What is your name?"

"Nesterenko."

That was the name of the man we were looking for; possibly he was this man's son.

"What is your profession?"

"All those who live here cut stone, from father to son and our grandfathers before us — all are stonemasons. Now tell me what you stopped me for and what you want? I haven't time to stand here, I must be going home."

"Is Vassily Denissov here in these rocks?" I asked.

"Who is that? I don't know anyone of that name."

The old man was unwilling to talk.

"We were told he was here, father. So we came and brought arms with us."

"No, no, there's no such man here."

The old man was a hard customer. So I asked:

"Will you call your son Stepan?"

"How do you come to know him?"

"We were boys together."

"All right. I'll call him so you can talk."

None of us knew Stepan, but Slessarenko had told me I must ask for Stepan Nesterenko.

"Just show him this note and he'll do all that's necessary."

Some moments later a man looked out of one of the passages and then came up to us. He was rather tall, thin, with light brown hair, a slight mustache and pale face.

"What do you want?" he asked calmly, examining us with quick, attentive glances. He was evidently perplexed.

"We must see Denissov."

"There's no such person here."

I took out the note which contained three words: "Receive these comrades," and an illegible signature. I learnt afterwards that there was, on the other side of the sheet, the imprint of a thumb and a scrawl. That was the partisans' sign.

He looked at the note.

"To whom were you told to give the note?" he asked.

"To you, Nesterenko."

"All right, I'll be back directly, boys."

We went into the tunnel where he told us to hide, for the sun had risen and the surrounding country day open before us, glowing in the bright rays. Nesterenko walked swiftly along the path which ran above the tunnels.

We turned into a passage and sat down on some stones to wait.

Presently, the dead silence was broken by the sound of steps. We could distinguish two voices speaking in a whisper.

"Shall I bind their eyes?"

"No, there's no need. They're friends," answered a familiar voice.

Vassily Denissov walked up to me. He wore a gray Russian coat gathered at the waist, with cartridge bands crossed on his chest. His blue eyes looked sternly from under a shaggy fur cap with a red cloth top. The impression of health and sturdiness was enhanced by his long military mustache. He shook hands with me.

"So, you're still alive!" he said. "I thought they'd caught you somewhere,, and made soup of you. These boys our friends?"

"Ah! We have some here already. There's one just escaped from prison, Dmitry Kossenko, an old sailor. A great fellow!"

We were led to the underground camp. Pitch darkness enveloped us. The lamps which our guides held threw a faint flickering light over a small space before us. An endless number of passages and blind alleys fan in all directions, some high and long, some short and narrow; they wound and crossed intricately. It was an underground city with thousands of dark, gloomy streets, occupying a site of about seven square miles. The great stone roof which overhung it was in places nearly three hundred feet thick.

Walking was difficult. We continually tripped over stones scattered in our path. We also felt bones and feathers under our feet. Our guides explained jokingly:

"The foxes have been eating the poultry."

In that underground city the air was heavy, charged with damp and mildew.

Sometimes, as the dim light of the lamps fell on the walls and corners of the passages, we saw bats hanging.

HEADQUARTERS

After wandering through dark, damp caverns, we came to the place which served as headquarters. It was a blind passage screened off by a jutting rock, forming a room.

"Get acquainted with those you don't know and make your- selves comfortable on our chairs and couches," said Denissov with a smile.

We sat down on a bunch of damp hay and cast our eyes about the underground lodging. A square stone in the middle of the room served as a table. Small stone squares placed around it served as chairs. A]big lamp and a shell holder into which an ink bottle had been fitted stood on the table. A broken pen- holder lay beside it. A tin box filled with oil with wicks stuck in it stood at the door ; it burned with a great spluttering noise, sending forth volumes of smoke and thin rays of light which faintly lit the interior of the cave. Dim lights enveloped in similar columns of smoke could be seen flickering down a long passage.

A little way down the passage stood a sentinel.

It all reminded one of a vault with a row of candles leading to a sepulture.

After some minutes about ten people collected in the room. They were dressed in a variety of garments, fur coats, army coats, ordinary civilian clothes. Most had cartridge bands tied across their chests and round their waists. Their faces were sooty with the smoke from the oil lamps. They all seemed fit and excited and noisily asked if we liked their lodgings.

Denissov told me of their work. They were already in communication with the surrounding villages through their representatives. The chairman of the revolutionary war staff had promised to send them a machine-gun and, maybe, even an armored car.

Denissov offered me work on his staff.

While we were talking, the men brought us bread and lard. Denissov's brother, Gregory, came in and we fell to with the best of appetites.

"How d'you find the lard, good?" asked Denissov.

"Not bad. Bought it?"

"Certainly not. Took it from the landlord. Such a landlord too!" said Denissov with a smile. "You can have a look at him. He's under arrest just over there."

"What landlord is that?"

"The one from Ghurbash. Okorok* is his name — and he's fat and funny."

"Will you keep him long?"

"No. What do we want him for? His son probably will bring us food today. Then we'll set him free."

That day the landlord's son brought some sacks of flour, lard, an ox and five hundred rubles. The landlord Okorok was immediately set free. The terrified man helped to make the detachment famous. After his liberation he went to Kerch where the whiteguards took him into their secret service. He gave very exaggerated information about the number of men in the detachment at Stary-Karantin.

1) *Okorok, in Russian, means "ham."

The information given us by Slessarenko was also exaggerated. There were only twelve men in the detachment. It is true they were all well armed, but then they had not really started work yet. Slessarenko, Syunko, Presinsky and a few others, were engaged in enlisting men in various parts of the region. The sailors Volkov, Gin, Timofayev were in a detachment which communicated with the revolutionary group in Stary-Karantin village. Two members of the Party, Comrades Khovrin and Baidikov, soon joined the detachment and later undertook Party work among the members.

Taking advantage of the enemy's uncertainty, the revolutionary war staff and Party nuclei hastened to inform the working masses in the town and rural districts of the existence of the partisan detachment. Stirring appeals were made at village meetings and among workmen asking them not to submit to whiteguard orders of mobilization. The poor peasants were called upon to unite round the Party and the revolutionary military staff, to organize themselves into partisan detachments and fight for the restoration of the Soviet regime which alone protected the workers' interests.

"The Soviet regime will crush all exploiters. It will deal in the most drastic fashion with all rogues and cheats. It will not allow the workers to be mocked. Let us, therefore, rise together to fight for the Soviet Government, the workers' government."

The appeal brought a warm response from the poor peasantry of the Kerch region. They came from all sections to the various quarries. We heard that another partisan detachment had been organized thirty-five miles from the town in the Petrovsk quarries, now called Lenin quarries. Our own detachment grew to seventy men in the course of a week.

Under the influence of the agitation carried on by the revolutionary staff and Party, the peasants' hatred of the Whites became unbounded. The mobilization which the Whites declared throughout the region failed. Resolutions were voted, worded after this manner:

"We, peasants of the village of — will not give the Whites a single pound of bread, not a single horse, not a single soldier. Enough deceit! Down with the whiteguard regime, down with violence and oppression! Let us give all help to the Bolsheviks.

Long live the Soviet Government! The government of workers and peasants!"

Meanwhile the kulaks and landlords supported the whiteguards, providing them with arms and grain of their own accord.

THE FIRST VICTORY

The whiteguards gave increasing attention to the quarries. But because of the information about the number of men in our detachment given by the landlord Okorok whom we had set free, they hesitated to attack us and tried to get information from other sources. They stopped inhabitants, mostly women who came to sell milk, and asked about the number of men in our detachment and whether we were well armed. Naturally, they got no precise information, although rumors about the detachment had spread among the inhabitants. The Whites finally resolved to ascertain our strength and fighting capacity by giving battle.

We got news of the attack prepared against us through our town nucleus No. 1.*

It was February 22, 1919 (orthodox style), in early spring. At dawn the whiteguards formed a chain at a distance of about fourteen hundred yards from our positions, hardly perceptible in the mist. They had two hundred and fifty men, armed with rifles and machine-guns. Our strength was seventy men.

1) *The chairman of the town nucleus was Stassevich.

We entrenched and waited for their attack, taking positions among the boulders on the surface of the quarry, on a hill which dominated the surrounding country and formed a natural fortress. It was impossible for the Whites to take it with the comparatively small force they had sent against us this time.

The mist began to clear. The enemy attacked in the early morning.

Although they were later reinforced with men and machine-guns, they were still unsuccessful against our little group of Red partisans. By the evening of the second day the advantage was definitely ours. The enemy retreated to the fortress, having lost a number of men, while we had only

one man wounded and another who, losing his foothold, had fallen off a rock and injured himself.

This first battle, which ended in the Whites' defeat, made a deep impression on the local population. The working masses became convinced of our fighting capacity and new groups of men arrived every day to join our detachment.

But, besides conscious revolutionaries, criminals from the underworld tried to get in. Some of them succeeded in joining the Stary-Karantin detachment. These bad elements from town dreamt of a free, independent life and big gain. But they did not get them. We mercilessly opposed banditry. Most of them, after experiencing the hard conditions of a partisan's life in those evil-smelling caves and the stern discipline to which they were subjected, left the detachment of their own accord.

Unfortunately our chief, Denissov, did not fight these mercenary aims. But the Party nucleus regarded it as a threat of degeneration and started propaganda among the men. It set to work to dispel bad tendencies . and focus each man's attention on problems connected with the reinforcement of the detachment.

The Communists continually and insistently enlightened the men in regard to the object of the detachment; they also tried to influence Denissov and curb the peasant element in him by friendly talks.

Denissov was of a free nature, daring and impetuous. His natural recklessness bordered on anarchy and embodied the individualist spirit of the peasants in our ranks. He knew the military business (having been sergeant-major in the imperialist war) and felt independent. Having the support of a large number of men, he often opposed the staff, acting on his own and posing as autocratic chief of the detachment, as if it belonged to him.

One day he did a thing which was most objectionable and dangerous. He began to give the partisans money. . . .

STRUGGLE FOR THE CLASS LINE

There was anxiety in our underground dwelling. Men, like phantoms in the dim light of the oil lamps, ran down the long main tunnel to the staff room. The heavy air was stirred by the swift movement of bodies; the oil lamps fastened to the walls winked and flickered incessantly, filling the passage with volumes of smoke through which their faint light showed dimly. Men's silhouettes brandished caps and rifles. Shouts and oaths echoed through the passages. The hubbub of voices waxed every moment.

"Sobachkin!" roared Denissov, without paying any attention to the noise. He stood on a rock, his big stature towering above the crowd. "Sobachkin! Take this and get your children grub!"

"Come on, Durnogai! Put out your hand!"

"Stop, stop!" cried Baidikov, the Communist, jumping up and shouting above the noise with his powerful voice. "Stop this shameless sharing. We won't stand for it."

The hubbub stopped.

"And who are 'we'?" demanded Denissov, with a threatening glance. "Who may you be?"

"We are conscious Red partisans."

"Am I a whiteguard, then?"

"You don't understand that you're leading the detachment to its destruction ... to profiteering ... to banditry!"

"Silence!" roared the furious Denissov. "I'll not allow any man to question my authority. I'm chief. If you don't like it, you can leave. I'll not stand men

who go against my orders. I wouldn't hesitate to have my own father shot if necessary. D'you get that?"

The giant stormed as he advanced upon Baidikov, who stood his ground and looked calm. "Understand? I'll not have it!"

"That's enough!" shouted Denissov's brother, Gregory, in a voice of thunder, jumping up and pushing his brother in the chest.

The whole detachment swayed back and waited breathlessly for what might follow.

Gregory was the strongest and biggest man of us all. His action was unexpected. He never spoke at meetings, was chary of speech, bull-like, unwieldy, but fearless, stern and just. The whole detachment knew him as such. His main quality was that he did not thirst for power, nor was he an individualist. In this he was the opposite of his brother. Gregory was a workman, one of the first among the partisans to join the Party group. Denissov himself admired him, was fond of him, yet feared him. Altogether he felt Gregory's push rather acutely.

"Stop it, brother," said Gregory in a calm, stern bass, as he pulled his brother aside from Baidikov. "Sharing is not to the common interest. You must understand that you're harming the detachment. If you can't understand it and go on threatening honest men, we'll have to part before you expect, for I'll cut your head off."

Denissov walked to the edge of the rock and, leaning on his rifle, looked down with an angry gleam in his eyes. The quarrel had to soften somehow.

"It isn't worth while cutting off heads, comrades," interrupted the Communist, Khovrin, calmly, climbing to the top of the rock. "The Whites do that sort of thing. If we start cutting off each other's heads there won't be enough to go round. If we want to blunt our swords, let's do it against the whiteguard trash."

"That's what I've been called," snarled Denissov furiously. "A whiteguard!"

"That's wrong, of course. We honor, admire and shall go on admiring Comrade Denissov," said Khovrin, turning to the partisans. "We all value his military experience. I think everybody knows that."

"Not everybody, it seems," grumbled Denissov, in a more peaceful tone.

"But," went en Khovrin, "we must decide, comrades, once and for all, who we are. Against whom and for what are we fighting?"

The question was plain. The simple words fell arrestingly upon the assembly. They stood silent in a cloud of thick brown smoke. After a few seconds, Khovrin went on:

"Yes, comrades! We must choose one of two things. Are we to live or die? Let's decide. If we decide tor money, we'll get rich. But that will corrupt the detachment and weaken the organizations which are working for us in town. Once that happens our heads really will be cut off. Otherwise we can make the detachment strong to free our wives, our parents and our children from the bandits' bloody whips; we shall take the land from the landlords and the factories from the capitalists. . . . We must choose. Shall we stay here under the ground, pitiful, solitary, strangers to all, or keep with the workers and peasants in the common effort and fight the White dogs to the bitter end?"

The eyes of the partisans gleamed with angry fires.

A roar of agreement burst from them. "No sharing. Fight the Whites for the revolution!"

Then a number of practical resolutions were adopted:

1. The detachment to be reinforced and stern revolutionary discipline introduced.
2. To abandon our former tactics and begin real guerilla warfare.
3. All means to be used to draw new groups of peasants, who sympathized with our ideas, into the detachment.
4. All the funds to be the property of the detachment, to be used only in exceptional cases, for reinforcing it.

Gregory Denissov was elected to control all economic questions. His election was unanimous.

A DEMONSTRATION

March had come. Spring was in the air and young grass had begun to sprout under the warm sun.

One morning early, orders were given to take the red banner and prepare for a demonstration.

"We'll make a rally," said our commander, "to show the enemy and the population how strong we are."

So the whole detachment came out on the hill-top, formed a chain, and started to maneuver among the burial mounds situated near the quarry. A long pole with the red banner waving from its top was erected on the highest mound.

This demonstration, which was our first, caused a disturbance among the whiteguards and the town population. Thousands of people climbed Mitridat mountain to have a look at the cave-dwellers.

That day the partisans of Stary-Karantin quarry declared open war against the Whites. Our small but enthusiastic group of revolutionary workers and peasants in our damp caves were pitted against the numerous army led by generals who made torture their profession, against an army with machine-guns, artillery, bombs, explosives, gas, and other equipment of modern warfare.

It was interesting to see how the population reacted to these events. Workers and peasants, fired by our example, continued to arrive at the quarry from all sides so that, after the demonstration, the detachment grew to a hundred and forty men, twice what it was. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie were panic stricken, their fears sharpened by rumors of our detachment's size.

We did our best to spread such rumors. On the day of the demonstration, our scouts took engineer Glasunov prisoner in the neighborhood of the quarry. He was treated well. A straw bed was made for him, he was fed on eggs, milk, butter. We impressed him with the fact that the cave-dwellers were not bandits, as the White press said, but conscious revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives in the struggle against oppression.

As we knew that, on his return to Kerch, Glasunov would be questioned by the Whites as to our numbers, we decided to give him the impression that the quarry was occupied by thousands instead of scores of men. This is how we did it.

Borrowing a few horses and trolleys from the Stary-Karantin stonemasons, all the partisans gathered around the cell where Glasunov was confined. The horses were to represent cavalry and the trolleys — artillery.

When all was ready, Denissov shouted orders;

"First and second battalion goes down passage so and so, third and fourth battalion down passage so and so."

Orders were also given to machine-gunners and cavalry. The partisans passed a number of times before Glasunov's cell with much noise and stamping. He thought a whole army was marching past, especially as he had already heard rumors in town as to our numbers.

Perplexed, he showered questions on us.

"How can you keep such an enormous detachment in these damp hills and yet avoid sickness? Where do you take the funds for maintaining your detachment?"

Vassily Baidikov furnished the answers:

"Hundreds of armed workers and peasants come to join us daily and we have stocks of arms. We find no difficulty in fighting sickness since we have plenty of medicament's. As for doctors, we bring them from town and we also have our own. We do not suffer from a shortage of funds as the

population supports us. Besides, we requisition foodstuffs from the local landlords."

"Comrades!" said Glasunov. "I see the rumors spread about you are false. I have heard no rough words here. You are really conscious workers and peasants gathered to defend your rights. I shall not forget the friendly way you have treated me."

Glasunov was set free. There were rumors that, on his return, he sent an article to the local daily in which he praised the partisans and the way we had acted towards him. It was rumored that the officers intended to kill him for that article, but he escaped in time. In any case, he disappeared from Kerch.

BATTLE AND SIEGE

Soon after our demonstration we got news of a proposed attack by the Denikin forces on all the partisans. Everybody was roused to prepare for battle. The inhabitants of the neighboring village of Stary-Karantin and the permanent inhabitants of the quarries, were immediately informed. They promised to support us and provide us with everything they could.

The first attack was made against the Stary-Karantin quarry. Comrades from neighboring villages constantly arrived, bringing us cartridges and remaining with the detachment. Our scouts informed us of the enemy's movements. All the reports showed that he outnumbered us and made our own detachment seem pitifully small.

But, in spite of that, we entrenched ourselves, to fight him in the open.

The commanders, with Comrades Khovrin and Baidikov from the Party group, gathered on one of the big burial mounds near the highroad where our main trenches were.

They discussed our small force.

"We must take the offensive and keep it at all 'costs,' they said. "If we succeed in that, we'll rouse the whole local population. They will get additional proof of our fighting capacity and will support us. The enemy will then be obliged to withdraw regiments from the Crimea which will weaken his front there against the Red Army."

It was the afternoon of March 15. The soft spring was at its height; young grass made the world green; the sun was warm, the weather clear; little clouds drifted over the sky. The enemy's line approached steadily. He was well equipped. A cavalry detachment was sighted in the distance, coming along the highroad from the west, evidently from Feodossya.

Our hearts were oppressed by the sense of approaching battle, a feeling which seizes both cowards and men of courage. One can, by much training, harden oneself to the influence of many events. But to remain calm in battle and before it, is quite impossible.

The order to fire was given. Our first volley 'forced the enemy to lie down and the firing became general on both sides. Machine-guns rattled. Trra-ta-ta-ta! Trra-ta-ta-ta! We answered them with sharp volleys from our rifles.

Meanwhile, the cavalry advanced upon us from the rear. Denissov ordered a company of fifty men, under Commander Yushko, who had had a great deal of experience with machine-guns in the old army, to occupy the road to Churbashino along which the Whites' cavalry were advancing. As they approached, Yushko's group opened fire; some enemy riders fell at the first shots. A few more furious volleys drove them to retreat.

It was difficult to break the enemy's ranks. But, thanks to the natural embrasures in the limestone rock, we succeeded in repulsing him throughout the day.

He would not make a frontal attack but encircled us and, by evening, concentrated a heavy fire upon our position. We could not stand against his artillery. The first shells wounded several of our men. Then under cover of his guns, he stormed our position and, by night, was at the very entrances to the quarry.

Hammered by his heavy artillery fire we retreated into our caves. Then began a long siege of our underground fortress.

CUT OFF

There were eleven of us who, being hard pressed, did not succeed in reaching the central passages connected with headquarters. We jumped into the nearest passage, from which we could see the Whites coming up and hear their shouting.

The whiteguard soldiers looked into the passages but hesitated to enter.

"Come out, sons of bitches," they cried. "You'll die in any case."

We stood in the middle of the passage, a few yards from the opening. They could not see us in the dark, but we could see everything that went on outside very clearly, even the birds which flew about near the opening. The Whites dared not brave that pitch darkness. Two young officers rushed into the mouth of the passage, shouting:

"Come out you bandits! You're dead men, anyway."

We stood silently behind projecting parts of the wall and watched them. They stared into the impenetrable blackness.

"There's nobody here!" they shouted to the rest.

Three more officers came in and one, the youngster who had jumped in at first, spoke in an almost childish voice:

"Isn't it strange, captain, that after a whole day's firing and while we have so many killed, they have none. That's extraordinary! They must be charmed men."

"Don't you know, ensign, that they carried their wounded away into the quarry. These people will not leave even a dead body lying about."

"The beasts!" remarked the ensign.

"No matter. We shall keep them here. A few days in this darkness and stench will fetch'em out. They'll stifle unless they come out; they can't stand it for long."

"You are right, captain. We have only been here a few minutes and my head already begins to ache. It will be a good deal worse down there where they've gone. . . ."

"Fetch a torch or a lamp," said the captain to a Cossack who was standing by, "and bring that old man from among the prisoners. We shall get lost without a guide."

So saying, he fired several times into the darkness. We waited with bated breath for them to come inside. Once we let them in, none should go out alive. We retreated a little further.

The Cossack soon came back with some lanterns. The officers lighted them and held their rifles ready. The captain made two of the stonecutters they had taken prisoners walk in front to guide them.

"After me, gentlemen!" he shouted.

The peasants, feeling their way along the wall, came close to us. We silently seized them and pushed them into a corner. They cried out in fear. At the same moment the partisans shot at the officers who fell with groans and shouts. One of them continued to fire at random from where he lay. The petrol in the lamps caught fire and helped us to finish them.

After that the Whites never again risked entering the quarries, contenting themselves with shouting insults at us from above.

We managed to join the rest of the detachment and found that the quarries were surrounded. Denissov gave orders that not a single shot be fired from within, to mislead the Whites and not waste cartridges.

The siege lasted three days. The Whites must have thought the whole detachment had perished, been stifled, died of starvation or scattered. As there seemed to be no movement in the quarries, they raised the siege.

AFTER THE SIEGE

The bourgeoisie of Kerch celebrated their "victory." The Menshevik paper, The Wave, and the Constitutional-Democrats' Voice of Life, gloated with big headlines. They told their readers the Red movement was crushed and the bandits wiped out. But the joy of the Denikin officers and their friends was short lived.

When night came, we sent news to No. 1 nucleus and to neighboring villages that we were alive and ready to fight again. Our resurrection had a great effect both on our foes, who couldn't believe it, and on our friends.

The partisans ran out into the sunshine, out of the cold, dank dungeon to fill their lungs with the warm clean air.

They took off their clothes and searched for lice, some cut their hair and washed, while the sentries studied the horizon through their field glasses.

The Whites had looted the village and done much wanton damage.

"May you die a dog's death, you savages!" yelled the women with faces of hatred turned towards the town.

The men swore angrily.

"What is going to happen?" everybody asked.

Each had his complaint.

"They've taken all my clothes."

"They've killed my cow."

"And my pig!"

"They've stolen my fowls."

"We've lost everything. They've taken our tools. How are we to work?"

They swore, cried out and sobbed aloud.

"It's starting again. There'll be no peace for anybody. They've come here, damn them! There's no peace for us any more."

One of the partisans, a man of middle height in a sheep skin cap, with fair hair and a mustache which was almost white and got continually into his mouth, ran through the crowd of weeping women and shouting men and jumped on a low wall. He had a rifle swung across his back and a band of cartridges across his chest. He cast a glance round and asked:

"Comrades! Do you know me?"

"We do. What of that?"

"Listen, then! I had a cottage. It's been destroyed. I've got nothing now; no cottage, no fowls, no pigs. What am I to do? Die or beg? That won't help us. Those who have anything left had better bring it into the quarry and we'll do without these things for a time, until our own people come; then we'll have everything."

"Stop it!" yelled a hoarse, unnatural woman's voice. "Damn you! It makes me sick to hear you. I had a dowry; furniture, a feather bed that was collected feather by feather. Where are they now? The officers will sleep on it and all through your fault, you rascals! You've come here and started this fuss, so now there's no peace for anybody. Why don't you go to Olivensk quarry and fight there? And you, Belyakov, throw your rifle away or you'll lose your life as you've lost your cottage. It's none of your business, I tell you! Let these devils go back to their holes. We'll go on cutting the stone. If we don't nobody'll be buying stone any more and the work will stop."

The inhabitants who still had some property left began to carry it to the caves, the remains of their poor household goods; chairs, pillows, buckets and tables.

When the woman who had shouted at Belyakov saw this, she hastened to save her own goods and chattels, crying, "Oh God! Our people have decided to go underground. It must be the officers coming again!"

WHITEGUARD TREACHERY

The Whites, having learned by bitter experience that armed struggle against us would cost them tremendous effort and many lives, came to parley.

On March 19, a squadron of cavalry approached the quarry. They sent a note by a village boy which said that, as a detachment, we were doomed to perish. "Let us give up unnecessary bloodshed. Renounce your odious enterprise. Why should you suffer? Let those who will, join us and the rest go home. Everything will be forgiven and forgotten. If you do not agree, you shall die. We are getting reinforcements. An engineering party is coming to blow up these quarries and destroy everything."

Our answer was prompt and definite:

"We don't care a damn for your engineering party. We invite you, Mr. Colonel, to come and pay us a visit. We'll show you how we forgive and forget."

Other whiteguard delegations came up that day. Their main object, evidently, was to discover our numbers and how the siege had affected us. We prepared to demonstrate it by putting groups of armed partisans in about twenty places, behind a stone wall two-thirds of a mile long, which had openings in it that led to the underground passages in the quarries. We parleyed with them from the nearest passages.

The enemy was persistent. The officers, on instructions from their chiefs, tried to convince us by arguments similar to those the colonel of the cavalry squadron had used.

It was useless to waste our time in talk.

One parley cost us the precious life of a good fighter. As we left the passages to speak with them, the first to come out was a tall partisan, wearing a black sheepskin cap and coat with cartridge bands across his

chest. The Whites evidently took him to be our leader. There was a volley and the partisan Miron Brodyagin fell, wounded to death in the stomach. The Whites laughed and galloped off to their squadron, which was stationed a little way off.

It was painful to watch the dying man's torture. A crowd of men, women and children collected round him, carrying lamps. The harsh-voiced woman who had railed at us for interfering in matters which she thought were not our concern, was also there.

"That's what will happen to all of you," she cried. "Look what you've done. What's to become of his orphan child? It's still unborn, but when it comes to life it will ask: 'Where's my father?' Dead for no reason at all!"

The women wept.

The dying man's agonized groans were soon over.

"He's dead!"

His pregnant wife, sitting on the ground beside him, cried out:

"Dead! What is to become of me!"

At noon we dug a grave, made a coffin and buried the hero Soviet fashion, with the honors of war. Some of the women wept and threw earth into the grave, saying:

"What kind of a burial is that? Holy Virgin, keep him and save him."

I went into the quarry to the headquarters cave. It was full of partisans. Smoke and soot hung in thick clouds over the heads of the men who sat or reclined on the damp straw. There was a great hubbub of voices, and all looked at the corner where a red banner with white lettering was attached to a pole fixed to a piece of rock. On the rock sat a delegate, a short, thickset man with intelligent eyes. That was Peter Ursatyev, a black-haired, calm-mannered sailor. He was a member of the revolutionary military staff of the partisan movement in Kerch, which had its headquarters in the Ajimushkai

quarries. These quarries were situated on the other side of the town, about one and a half miles from it and about four miles from us, near the Bryansk plant. Ursatyev was sent by the revolutionary military staff to discover exactly how things stood with us, the quality of our detachment and our numbers, organizations, communications and so on.

We gave the desired information.

But Denissov showed a certain mistrust of the newcomer. As a rule it was difficult to talk to Denissov. He was very chary of speech and unwilling to answer questions. He did not like decisions taken in common. He was a stern man and resented interference in what he thought was his business. When he saw that the comrades in general were giving Ursatyev information, he refused to take part in the talk, but walked aside and lay down resentfully on the straw. Ursatyev tried to draw him into the conversation.

"You're the chief, Denissov," he said, "so why do you lie in that corner? We must settle things, you and I."

"It's all right," said Denissov, in a discontented tone, waving his hand towards a group. "Those who know so much will tell you everything. They're all wise. My business is to shoot the White dogs. I'll let you politicians attend to your politics."

Ursatyev tried to soothe him.

"We all know you're a good fighter. They talk about you in the staff, you know."

"Much I care for your staff."

"Not "yours" but "ours," Ursatyev interrupted him. "It's the staff of all the partisan detachments of Kerch region and at the head of all the detachments in Petrovsk, Stary-Karantin and Ajimushkai."

"I know without asking the staff what must be done here, in my own detachment. You attend to your own business in Ajimushkai. You don't

seem to be doing much fighting. We've had our battles. What about you?"

"That's just what I am saying," Ursatyev answered. "We must know about each other's business. Why are you making a fuss? Let's have a good talk. You'll find out all about us."

Denissov went nearer to him and sat down on the straw.

"As I've told you, comrades," Ursatyev began, "we have a large detachment, some hundreds of men, and we're working like the devil to get recruits. We give special attention to rural districts, enlisting young men from the villages. Our work in town is also progressing. We must first enlist new men and reinforce the detachment and afterwards start military activities. We must all occupy a number of quarries and if we are to do any good, we must act jointly. These are the tasks the staff has set itself. If we start war without being prepared for it, without definite plans and joint action, we may be driven into a hole. Then you'll starve to death here in these catacombs."

Ursatyev learned all he wanted to know: he was told we numbered over a hundred and fifty men, was made acquainted with protocols and resolutions, our connection with the villages and with the No. #1 Party nucleus in the town.

Ursatyev next asked about our funds. He took a document from his pocket and handed it to Denissov, saying as he did so:

"Comrades, this is a letter from the revolutionary military staff."

The letter asked us to hand over part of the money we had taken from the engineer, Glasunov, to be used for the needs of the staff and detachment.

Denissov was indignant.

"No, no! I'll not give any money to anybody. This money belongs to the detachment and will be used exclusively for its reinforcement. Besides, I don't know who these people over there are who want this money. What's the trouble? Are they sorry for the landlords? I don't recognize anybody

except in our detachment and don't trust anybody. The sly dogs! It's money they want, is it?"

"So you don't trust me or the staff?"

"I don't," said Denissov sharply.

"All right," Ursatyev answered calmly. "I'm leaving now. I'll tell them that Denissov is acting independently, will not obey anybody, doesn't trust anybody or recognize any authority. . . ."

These words shook Denissov's self-assurance — the more so as the Communists in the detachment spoke against him, supported by his brother Gregory who delivered himself with great heat.

"Although you are the chief," said Gregory, "you have no right to act so. You must obey the staff which is above you. We must help each other. Our strength lies in that. I insist that the money be handed over to the revolutionary military staff."

Finally, Denissov agreed to let the staff have part of the money. I do not remember the amount he handed to Ursatyev, who left that night.

AGONY IN THE CAVES

Meantime, we were surrounded by cavalry outposts and White scouts, preliminary to another attack.

Early in the morning, soon after sunrise, the enemy began his attack.

At dawn we had climbed out to the top of the mound and entrenched ourselves for battle. One of the platoons was instructed, if the Whites pressed us hard, to retreat into the passages and lie low. Then, at night, they were to come out behind the enemy and create a panic. This would be easy to do through the secret passages especially as the Whites did not remain near the entrances at night, fearing surprise attacks.

So, beforehand, we sent two trusted guides into the passages and a few of our men with food and water for the platoon. By about eight o'clock, the enemy had surrounded the quarry, but not in a serried chain as they had done two days before. The Red Army's approach from the north (occupying Yankov, Simferopol, and other points), had drawn off the regiments which had attacked us then. The forces now before us were new, collected together at random. We defied all their efforts. They could not strike us a serious blow or drive us back into the quarry, whereas we sent them back helter-skelter a number of times.

The enemy then changed his plan. Concentrating his forces on one side in the direction of 'the fortress, he entrenched himself on the highway. Next day the White staff sent a large reinforcement, collecting all they had in Kerch.

After several very obstinate attacks, we retreated into our caves. The Whites surrounded us and began a siege. Our position was bad from shortage of food, for we had been unable to make provision because of the fighting. We were without water and suffered terribly from both thirst and hunger. We ate grain, roast and raw. We searched for drops of water that might be trickling from the damp walls and licked the gray stones to moisten and cool our

burning mouths. We roamed drearily through the passages in groups, carrying dimly burning lights, hardly visible in the long galleries. Groups of us stood at the crossings, with bowed heads and drawn, harassed faces. What next? Were we to die of starvation? Oh, for a drink of water!

"We're doomed!" many thought. Some said it aloud. "There's no way out. We can't break through either to the village or the wells. The end is near. We have no more strength to fight!"

In these desperate circumstances, we called a meeting of company commanders, the most experienced partisans and Party workers, to discuss ways out of our plight. It was decided to make a sally and break through to the Bagyerovo quarries, four or five miles from us. To divert the attention of the Whites, a raid must be made from there. That would give the impression that there were partisan detachments in all the quarries surrounding the town. We sent scouts at once to the Bagyerovo quarries to discover their position. We also decided, in case we abandoned the Stary-Karantin quarry, to leave a few men to meet recruits who came to join the detachment and guard the local inhabitants who had taken refuge there.

Two days later, Our scouts brought news that the Bagyerovo quarry was not under attack. A detachment was acting there under Kutepov and Daniel Abazaly. The scouts had also stopped a cart train with the property of some landlords which they had taken into the quarry, where a place had been prepared for us. The goods consisted of food, plenty of odd things and even some barrels of wine.

The news was whispered that we were to make a sally next day. None could tell what the outcome of the enterprise would be.

Picture the scene in our caves at that moment! Groups of people in dark passages, dimly lit here and there by flickering lamps, surrounded by pillows, mattresses, baby cradles. Snores and heavy breathing filled the place with sound. Babies whimpered, mothers crooned and swore over them, by turns.

"You'll be the death of me, you damned brat! I've no strength left, and there's your father wants war."

"When your father's killed what shall I do with you? Some people are lucky — their children die, but these brats of mine have nine lives, like cats. I wish somebody would take one away."

Then the woman would start kissing her baby, playing with it, nursing it and saying:

"Suck your milk, so you'll grow fast."

A sturdy old woman of about sixty woke up and began to scratch herself. She raked her scalp under its covering of thin hair, and searched her clothes for lice, complaining to herself:

"They won't let you rest a minute. I haven't slept a wink. My whole body's sore. Oh, God! Why should I be made to suffer such pain in my old age? I've lived for nearly sixty years with my old man and never harmed anybody, and here's the reward. My sons have been killed in the German war. Who will care for us old people now? We had a cottage at least, but even that's gone!"

The old woman went on muttering for a long time, making the sign of the cross; then she drew her damp clothes around her and tried to go to sleep.

Hard by there was a roomy cave which stank of manure.

One could hear the movement of cattle, pigs and horses, the crowing of cocks, the cackle of geese. These animals were the property of the new cave-dwellers — stonecutters who had cut these tunnels, little knowing that one day they would have to hide in terror under the damp, dark vaults.

"All partisans to come to a meeting!" the partisans called to one another.
"Wake those who are sleeping and come out, everybody!"

The partisans collected at a crossing where a stone had been set in the middle to serve as a platform for speakers.

"Bring some more lamps, so we can see!"

Presently Denissov climbed on the stone.

"Comrades!" he began. "You must get ready at once. We're going to leave this quarry immediately. We'll be back in a few days. We're doing it for the good of the cause. We'll go in two hours' time and will leave behind some fellows we can trust. If any new recruits come, they'll meet them and find out what sort of people they are. Do you agree?"

Voces from the crowd answered:

"We do!"

Others demanded to know where we were going.

Denissov avoided giving a direct answer.

"When we get to some place, we'll stop there," he said evasively. "We're leaving Kirianov here — he knows all the rocks and crannies of these caves in the dark. We also leave Stepan Nesterenko, who knows the quarries well. He's a local inhabitant and understands all he must do in respect of recruits. And here's Ivan Ponomarev, who is an old corporal; he'll stay here to attend to military matters. He'll guard the quarry. We'll leave a few comrades to help him. Do you agree?" he asked the partisans.

"We do!" shouted many voices.

"Now each squad will go back to its quarters. Some cakes have been baked for you. Each man will receive a piece to give him strength. After that, you will get ready to march out in full battle array."

In a minute, all the inhabitants of the caves had heard the news, including the partisans' wives who took their children and went to say farewell to their husbands.

"What shall we do, all alone!" they cried.

"You've started all this and now you're going, leaving us to perish. As soon as the Whites find out they'll come in and kill everybody. We'll not stay here, we'll go with you."

Others shouted:

"And we'll get back to Stary-Karantin village."

Others again said:

"No, we'll not let our men go. They shall stay here with us. If we're to die, we'll at least die together."

The comrades tried to convince them that we would not be away long and would come back with food and water. There were farewells and weeping, kisses, groans, cries. Little children tugged at their fathers' coats, asking tearfully:

"Where are you going, dad?"

The weeping and cries were broken by a command shouted down the passage:

"First, second and third squad, form ranks!"

All the squads formed ranks. The chief walked along the ranks and told some of the men to step out.

The men chosen were old stonemasons who, because of their large families, were being left to guard the quarry. The remaining men were counted — a hundred and seventy. Comrade Khovrin and another comrade — I think it was Dmitry Kossenko, the chief of our scout work — made a speech. They said that those who were caught lagging behind must be shot down without hesitation, lest the Whites catch them and they give us all away. . . some might even betray us of their own accord. For who could read men's thoughts?

THE SALLY

On the night of March 25 (old style), equipped with lamps and lanterns, the partisans moved stealthily, in single file, to the entrance, silent as death, for the roof was not so thick near the entrance and any noise might be heard by the Whites above us.

We trod carefully, in complete silence, stifling an occasional cough, feeling like conspirators, intense, ready. I glanced back upon the line of shadows who moved in zigzags from behind the corner of the passage, trying not to trip or collide with each other. The commanders and guides walked like phantoms at their side, carrying little smoky lamps and lanterns. It might have been a secret funeral procession in some ancient catacomb. The dirty gray, mildewy walls had never witnessed anything like it and the bats, pressing close to the roof of the passage, must have watched us with astonishment in their little eyes.

The sally began at about eleven. Scouts, sent out first, reported that the enemy's main forces were centered on the surrounding mounds. We went out one by one, silently, like animals out of their lairs, and moved towards the field which lay behind the quarry. As we started to form ranks, the Whites caught sight of us and opened fire, single rifle shots at first, then with machine-guns. The firing became hot and uninterrupted; but the shots sang above our heads, without a casualty. Then the firing suddenly stopped — the Whites had decided that we had come out of a secret passage and were flanking them, to attack them in the rear. As we discovered later, they abandoned their positions to avoid our supposed maneuver, retreating rapidly towards the fortress and the town. Maybe, they intended to deceive us, but their trick was not successful. After a time, a searchlight from the fortress scanned the country vainly in search of us. We moved to the left of Jar Java village through the farm of Petrenko Morchenko, hurriedly eased our thirst, took some provisions, carts, and a large barrel of water and marched rapidly in the direction of the Bagyerovo quarries.

These quarries are situated an a flat stretch of ground, at a distance from the hills. There was not a single mound on that plain; the quarry openings went down into the ground like wells. A mounted whiteguard patrol, evidently posted to watch the quarries, saw us and fired a few volleys. Under their fire, we descended into this mysterious underground city.

It consisted of enormous galleries with capacious openings, thirty feet wide in places. There was a lot of sheep's dung in the passages, especially near the entrance, where neighboring landlords used previously to drive their sheep on hot days. We sat down in squads on the straw with which the floor was thickly strewn, leaning our rifles against the wall. A good supper awaited us — butter, goats' cheese, bread, fresh mutton and a mug of wine apiece from the landlords' train. After our days of starvation, the food and wine had a quick effect on us. Exhausted by the dreadful siege and the march, we slept like logs

WE ATTACK A TRAIN

Early morning. Deep silence everywhere. The fields lay green under the warm Crimean sun. Here and there odd peasants sowed grain on freshly plowed plots.

On that calm morning a freight train could be seen moving slowly from the north. Our scouts reported the fact to the chief of our detachment. I went above ground with Denissov and some other comrades to look at it. The locomotive was puffing and blowing as the train rolled nearer.

"That train is ours. . . we're going to take it," said Denissov, screwing up his eyes as he tried to see through his field glasses. It is quite possible that he didn't see it, because he happened to be drunk. However, he shouted angrily to the commanders of the guards:

"To arms! Prepare for an attack!"

The order was repeated down the galleries.

Despite their great weariness the whole detachment ran out, stumbling over stones as they came, and formed into line above the wall of the quarry, which was seven feet high. The partisans rubbed their eyes, still heavy with sleep, yawned, shuddered nervously. Some of us began to argue with Denissov, saying that we must not attempt to attack when the men were tired out. We must be allowed to rest. . . .

Denissov would not listen.

"I'm the chief. I know what I'm doing. We'll take that train. Then we'll take a rest."

Khovrin and Kossenko told him he must consult with the local detachment, which was in another gallery of the same quarry, and act jointly with it.

"They have their own chiefs," answered Denissov sharply, "they've got heads on their shoulders and so have I."

His brother Gregory laid his hand on the butt of his revolver.

"You're drunk and don't know what you're doing. Don't insist or I'll call you to order."

The comrades held Gregory back. One of his lungs was injured, having been shot through. A just man, he liked to come to peaceful understandings. He was quite different in manner from his brother Vassily. A carpenter by profession, he had finished at a handicraft school and served through the imperialist war in the old army. He had returned from the front in 1917 and fought as a Red Guard in the Kuban. A tall, handsome, blue-eyed fellow, with brown hair and a slightly long nose, his cheeks were always flushed, because of his lung. In spite of a strong temper when he was roused, he was a calm man. He could sit for hours thinking or talking in slow, sensible tones, without bursting out irritably as some people do from habit. The whole detachment respected him. His influence over his brother was good. Vassily had great respect for him, calling him a wise head and being ready as a rule to listen to his opinion.

But this time Vassily Denissov would not listen to reason. He turned to the detachment, shouting:

"Comrades! I am your chief. We've always been together and seen the same dangers. We've been successful in war. No, I tell you, we'll take that train!"

"We'll take it!" shouted the men.

He had known beforehand that the detachment would support him.

He shouted:

"Attack the train!"

We formed into a chain and moved towards the railroad and the approaching train. We had to cover about half a mile. As the train drew

near, we saw the anxious faces of the Whites look out from the windows. Later, we learned that these were White forces drawn from the front to suppress the partisan movement.

The partisans went to the attack in high spirits, as usual. As soon as we left the quarry, Kutepov, the chief of the other detachment, placed a wooden gun in front of the quarry to frighten the Whites. As the train came abreast of us, the command was given:

"Forward, comrades!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted the men.

The train stopped and the enemy landed over a score of machine-guns behind the railway line. Then the train backed out and we were facing enemy machine-guns, posted on the embankment, which opened fire at once.

"Lie down!" Denissov shouted.

"Dig trenches!"

But none of us had spades. We lay flat on the ground and fired at long intervals. The enemy's shots flew all around us; we could hear the groans of the wounded, one of them, Comrade Khovrin. Then, several score of mounted men came to the enemy's assistance. They galloped at us from the left flank with raised sabres, shouting oaths as they came. Our hearts sank. It looked very bad for us. But suddenly, the riders began to fall over their horses' heads and hang limply from their saddles. The horses galloped off in different directions.

The detachment commanded by Kutepov and Abazaly had struck the enemy's cavalry, pouring a heavy fire into them. Under Kutepov's cross fire, the enemy's machine-guns were also forced to retreat behind the railroad and could not, in that situation, take good aim.

We used the advantage to retreat.

A few hours later, powerfully reinforced, the enemy besieged us in the quarry, locking us as in a stone grave.

SIEGE AND PROPAGANDA

The White attack on the Bagyerovo quarries was determined and vicious. They pressed us closely, making desperate attempts to get into the quarry. But every time we drove them back, carrying their killed and wounded. It was rarely that a whiteguard, entering the passage, got out again alive.

Sitting in a gallery we watched them, through unnoticeable crevices, throw bombs into other openings.

"Look at the machine-guns these swine are bringing!"

It was the machine-gun company of the Alexeyevsky regiment of officers; the regiment itself was climbing over the railway embankment. Another line of Whites, less numerous, was approaching from the hill on the other side of the quarry.

They moved rapidly, intending to close round the quarry quickly, all together.

We gazed intently at the officers' approaching figures and waited for the order to fire.

But no order was given.

The platoon commander ran in, saying:

"Not a single shot! We'll let them in. They're new, so they'll come in. Then we'll shoot them."

We watched a group of officers approaching one of the openings. Among them was a handsome woman wearing the red cross. A great-dane ran beside her. The officers carried bombs in their hands and walked stealthily. We had a good view of the wide opening. Two officers stepped forward and, looking into the black depths, threw their bombs. Bluish fights flashed

and there was the sound of an explosion. We waited to open fire from our hidden post, but Gregory Denissov, who was with us, did not allow it.

"This will be our secret observation point," he said.

He left the three of us there saying, as he ran to the opening:

"Maybe some of our men have been killed. I'll go to see."

The officers jumped into the opening after their bombs. We heard a faint sound of firing. Then a woman's voice crying out wildly from above.

"Oh, my God! He is killed, he is killed! They have killed my husband!"

Then we saw the woman with the red cross rush into the opening.

We heard another faint volley from inside.

"What's happened?" asked an anxious voice directly above our heads.

"Two officers killed, colonel, and a red cross nurse. She ran in after them."

The colonel, a big man with a fat stomach, yelled at the top of his voice:

"Fetch them out all costs. Go on, fetch them out, you rascals!" he shouted at the orderlies who were forcibly mobilized soldiers.

An officer jumped in without waiting for the orderlies. We heard the crack of another volley inside. The colonel ran up to the orderlies, struck one of them and pushed them towards the opening, shouting:

"Get them out immediately, you dogs!"

The orderlies moved into the opening, the colonel following. But they had not gone far before the partisans shouted, "Hands up!" The orderlies were taken prisoners without being shot at. Unable to stand inactive we fired at the colonel, who fell like a shot partridge.

Whereupon the dog rushed into the gallery and, taking the colonel's coat between its teeth, began to pull the body out.

Gregory Denissov came back to us after a while.

"Well, boys! There's a whole heap of them lying over there, officers and a woman. Our chaps have already taken off the officers' clothes and dressed up in military uniform. Two prisoners have been taken."

"Yes, we heard it all. And we lost patience and shot a colonel," we told him.

"Did anybody notice you?" he asked anxiously.

"No, No! Nobody could see it," we assured him.

The partisans did not fire at random. They spared the mobilized soldiers and shot mostly at officers and volunteers. That made the officers furious.

They swore at their soldiers and, pointing to the cave, shouted:

"You are curs, like those who are hiding there."

It was easy for us to make our choice of a target. Sitting, as we were, in the dark, we could see the enemy's every movement on the surface, while the enemy, from the light into our darkness, could not see us, could not even see from where the shots came. In some of the highest passages we could even see the Whites standing over our heads, on the top of the quarry.

When the orange sky darkened and the stars came out with the falling night, the Whites' fusillades and bomb throwing became intense. They seemed to be trying to fill the openings with bombs, as if bent on keeping us below.

On the second day the shooting slackened. There was rare firing, but the quarries were completely encircled.

"They are going to starve us out," the partisans said to each other.

"But they shall not take us," our leaders declared.

It was everybody's opinion that we should get in touch with the soldiers. They had been forcibly mobilized by the Whites and were ragged and looked depressed; we ought to be able to get them on our side. So we looked for convenient openings, where there were no officers near, and spoke to them, saying:

"Comrade soldiers! Who is it you've come to kill? Who are the men you are hunting down? What good will it do you if you kill any of our comrades, who are fighting against capitalists and officers, who are striving for the liberation of workers and peasants like yourselves? Do you really care to defend the landlords' estates and the private owners' factories? Aren't you tired of the officer's whip, the landlord's treatment, poverty, prison and hard labor? Turn your arms against your officers. Join us, help the Red front to finish with the bourgeoisie and to restore the Soviet regime and workers' government."

We asked the orderlies we had taken prisoners to make propaganda. They spoke to the White soldiers:

"Come and join us," they said. "We are quite happy and will not go back. The people here are workers like ourselves. There are no officers to strike workers and peasants in the face. These men here fight against their class enemies. You see, they spared us, while they killed all the officers. You are told these men are bandits. But that is a lie. These people stand for the Soviet Government."

The orderlies shook the rifles we had given them.

"See! We have joined the partisans!"

Many of the mobilized soldiers listened and our propaganda was rather successful. They came by stealth to meet us and have talks, many came over to us, taking arms from the Whites and bringing them to us. Those who joined our ranks said it was difficult to do anything more, since the Whites had a miscellaneous force, the soldiers did not know each other and were closely watched.

Among those who came over were a number of Red soldiers from Stavropol, who had been made prisoners by the Whites and had revolutionary leanings. Once some of the soldiers killed their officer who was bawling at them and rushed into hiding in our quarry.

CHECHENTSY

The Whites discovered our propaganda and hastened to withdraw the mobilized companies, fearing they would join us. Trusted regiments of Chechentsy and Cossacks, known for their hatred of partisans, replaced them. From the moment of the arrival of these, there was no let-up in the firing and bomb throwing.

One day during the siege some Chechentsy who were sitting over one of the openings, playing the accordion, shouted to us in their broken Russian:

"Hey, you animals! Why you hide in hole? How you live there? You like devils now. You think your freedom good? We not want your freedom. We have real freedom — in the open, in the steppe, in the sun. We are all free! We not want your way, not ask for it. Nobody can cheat us, we no fools like you. We live real freedom. We no want prison, no want holes. We are happy, we have much food, we have wine, mut-ton, we dance, we are gay. We not listen to German spies. You must not listen to them. Better come to us. Our life good. Come on friends, we not harm you. Make peace. We forgive everything. We will dance our dance together!"

To which we answered:

"You tell that to your rascally officers! You're too young to make propaganda, you Caucasian sheep! The officers have made fools of you. You're as silly as sheep. Savages! You're no better than bandits!"

We suspected their trickery and were wary, not showing ourselves but shouting back from within.

One day the Giechentsy tied a bottle of wine to a string and let it down into the tunnel, shouting to us and, this time, calling us "comrades."

"Take and drink. We kind men, good men, always ready to divide with poor, hungry men."

One of the partisans, standing behind a projecting part of the stone wall, threw a stick which struck the string. The string vibrated. The Chechentsy thought we had come to take their bottle and threw several bombs. There was an explosion and the passage filled with smoke. But they could not see us behind the projecting wall. We were only a little deafened. We immediately began to jeer at them.

"Throwing dust in our eyes — that's all you're fit for! You're robbers, not fighters. Your bombs are empty; even the English cheat you. They give you empty bombs that won't kill."

The Chechentsy swore. . . .

Three of us ran to the opening and threw a bomb each upwards. Angry shouts and the groans of wounded men followed the explosions. The Chechentsy started to fire in response.

Some of our men told me how they had once caught a Chechenets.

"We crawled silently to the opening and saw a Chechenets sitting near it, napping. We guessed he was drunk and decided to collar him. A few of us crept up to him and suddenly shouted in unnatural voices: 'Ho-ho-ho!' That frightened him. We dragged him underground. He shouted 'Help!' but it was too late. We had him and laughed, saying: 'You're a good fighter, you are. You go and make such a mistake as to shout "Help!" when you ought to shout, "Hurrah!"' Though he was very frightened, he almost smiled and said:

'True I make mistake. I shout help instead of hurrah'."

There were other incidents. One of the partisans went out dressed like an officer. He shouted at the Chechentsy and Cossacks, swore at them and made them run about, while they took him for an officer. He killed one of the officers with whom he had a discussion and jumped into the quarry when our own sentries fired at him. "You nearly killed me!" he complained.

DYNAMITE AND TERROR UNDERGROUND

In spite of machine-guns, bombs, the siege, no matter how they tried, the Whites could not take us. In view of their big losses, they thought of a new method, dynamite. They had a lot of it. All the tunnels of Kerch fortress were filled with crates of dynamite, shell, torpedoes, cartridges and ammunition of all kinds, which were a source of much anxiety to the inhabitants of Kerch and the surrounding villages, since an explosion in one of the tunnels might blow up the whole town.

The firing had abated. Many of us, released from our posts, had gone down for a rest. Suddenly, we were hurled against the wall in a whirlwind of dust and stone splinters. Then, we were as suddenly thrown back. There was a deep rumbling roar. The place rocked as in an earthquake. We were covered with fragments of stone, straw and odd litter; our rifles were torn from our hands, all the lamps were extinguished. Complete darkness and deathlike silence, broken by groans and the faint rattle made by men moving under the stones which covered them. One of the partisans had a candle. By its dim light we looked into each other's frightened faces, standing motionless, wondering what had happened. We conjectured that the top of the quarry had fallen in, that a big shell had burst in the quarry, that gas had exploded.

Utterly at a loss and fearful, we ran to the openings. Two explosions had broken off enormous slabs of rock; they had split off in layers from the roof; some were still hanging. Holes had been blown in the roof.

More explosions followed, one after the other. The Whites were putting in dynamite on the surface. The concussions were so powerful that no one could escape from their effect. Many comrades were killed. We were thrown about in all directions, lifted into the air. When several explosions occurred simultaneously, it was terrible. We could not stand. Groups of men suddenly would be scattered in all directions, thrown about like sacks of straw. We were in terror. Hundreds of us down there groped about in the dark looking for a nook or cranny in which to hide. Some of the partisans

actually muttered prayers, made the sign of the cross, cried upon god to save them! Others swore most obscenely.

"Better that the whole quarry fall in and crush us than that we suffer like this!"

From the openings that were left we could see the explosions, one after the other. They were like volcanic eruptions. Great bursts of flame in thick black volumes of violently coiling, ragged-edged smoke, twenty feet high. Regular columns of it. At night, when the Whites made several big, simultaneous explosions, the smoke columns were purple and each of them cast a dim light over the scene. These were terrible hours. The Whites used six or eight satchels of dynamite at a time — about a hundred poods or over two tons! These hundred poods made an earthquake, blowing huge craters in the ground twenty to thirty yards in diameter.

The position of our sentries was terrible. Yet we could not do without them. I was one of them. We had to stand and listen for the sounds of digging above to discover where they were going to put in the dynamite. We could hear them rolling kegs nearer; could even count the number of kegs. Then there would be silence. After a moment, the sound of running feet. That meant the fuse had been lit. We sentries then ran frantically into the depths of the quarry. To remain was certain death. The force of the explosion would twist arms and legs. Men were crushed by the collapsing wall. Every time, after an explosion, we could hear the big stones and lumps of rock falling back from the sky on the roof of the quarry outside.

The siege lasted nine days. We had no bread or water. There was not even a drop of water for the wounded. After nine days of such torture everybody was exhausted. We fed at first on raw grain and raw meat. Then we went without, for that only lasted the first few days. The partisans were so thin you could count their ribs. Their belts were slack. They kept on mumbling desperately, terribly, quietly to themselves:

"Oh! I'm so hungry!"

"I wish I had just a bite!"

"I am thirsty . . . thirsty!"

"I am burning with thirst . . . I can't bear it!"

We heard that the Red Army had already won half the Crimea and was advancing on Kerch. But would the end come soon? The one thought in our minds was to hold out for them. We wanted them so much . . . to set us free from our hell . . .

We wandered about ragged, bare skin showing through the great rents in our clothes, exhausted skeletons, covered with soot and stone dust, with blackened faces. We were as weak as if we'd had typhoid. Our lips were swollen from sucking the stones.

Death stood at our elbows, snatching man after man.

I cannot forget one young boy who died near me. He suffered terribly. The way he called out in his despairing agony will never leave my mind —

"Mother! Mother! Dad!"

"Save me! Save me!"

All these things were dreadful. One's heart sank with terror.

I expected to die myself at any moment. It was an unmitigated horror. But none of us wished to fall into the hands of the Whites.

"Shall we try to break through?" some asked desperately.

"No," said others. "It's impossible."

One day one of the men began to dance about and yell so that we had to bind him. He had gone mad.

WE BREAK THROUGH

The chiefs of both detachments, political workers and active partisans, gathered together to discuss the possibilities of breaking through to join the main forces in the Ajimushkai quarries under the command of the revolutionary military staff. The odds were against success. Nevertheless, it was decided to make the attempt. We realized that, not only a detachment of two hundred exhausted and sick men, but a whole regiment might be insufficient and perish. But we hoped night would help us, especially as the Whites still feared us, not knowing what our exact numbers were. Our only chance was to try it when new White regiments came to relieve the old ones.

Before making the sally, the staff called a meeting of both detachments. Comrade Kutepov made a speech. He explained that the only means of saving the detachment was to take it to Ajimushkai, where the main forces of the partisans were. To achieve this we must create a panic in the enemy's ranks. We could break through only by doing that.

"We know it," said the partisans.

"How can we break through when we are weak from hunger?"

"We'll perish, most likely. Looks as if our end has come."

"We don't want to die here either. If we wait any longer, we'll not be fit to move."

"We'll go and there's an end of it," the men declared gloomily. "We can't abandon each other, nor leave anybody in the hands of such beasts. It's frightful to think how they'll torture those they catch."

Fifty men were chosen from volunteers to cover our exit. They were to crawl out, lie down outside and remain absolutely quiet until the whole

detachment had left the quarry. Then they were to follow. The cavalry was to come last.

The sally began at night between eleven and twelve. The fifty scouts, commanded by Comrades Khovrin and Kossenko, silently crawled out and took up positions in front of the enemy's machine-guns, which stood a little distance off. The whole detachment of two hundred men then sallied forth, the cavalry behind. The starved horses, giddy from the unaccustomed air, fell with their riders. The enemy discovered us. But it was too late. We cried, "Hurrah! Hurrah!" Shots were fired, oaths shouted. Before the Whites could work their machine-guns the whole detachment followed suit.

A hot skirmish ensued. The Whites scattered and began to run towards the railway, falling as they went. Their panic was complete. The partisans burst through their lines and made for the direction of Ajimushkai. Our leaders Kutepov and Denissov mounted their horses and under their joint command our battered men dragged themselves to Ajimushkai.

IN AJIMUSHKAI

From early morning the surrounding population began to collect in the gallery where we were. Some brought Easter presents, others came simply to see their friends and relations.

The overwrought partisans lay in troubled sleep, where they had flung themselves down. Bare bleeding skin showed through their ragged clothes. Most of them groaned, gritted their teeth, shouted words of command or warning, laughed, cried aloud as they lay. Some staggered to their feet, still with their eyes shut and tried to run from imaginary dangers, tripping over stones, falling and cutting their faces.

The peasants, seeing their sufferings, wept silently, the women knelt stretching their hands to heaven and begging god for mercy. We explained to them that there was no god to release their sons. We talked to them at length and many of them remained in the quarries. The women left their children in the care of their old people and came to us as nurses.

After a breathing space, we prepared for new battles. The revolutionary military staff called a meeting of the active members of all the detachments.

The headquarters was situated in a blind alley, the floor of which was littered with straw. An enormous piece of hewn rock, in the middle of that gloomy chamber, served for a table. On it stood a lighted lamp and a typewriter sent by the town Party organization.

The head of the staff, Samoilenko, submitted two questions for discussion: the concentration of forces, and supplies for the detachment.

"We have at present five hundred infantry," he said. "We must center our whole force in the Ajimushkai quarries. We must not scatter ourselves. We can then strike the enemy powerful blows. This will solve a number of other problems. The Karantin detachment levies too much on the landlords. That is wrong. At present it is politically unprofitable."

"How will you feed the men?" somebody shouted from the crowd. "You think of the landlords but forget our stomachs."

"He wants to feed us on air," another voice chimed in.

"Stop yelling!" Samoilenko ordered. "We must appeal to the peasants, borrow grain from them."

"That's hopeless," said Ursatyev, a member of the revolutionary military staff. "That's empty talk. The poor peasants have no grain. They are starving as it is. The average peasant* have been robbed clean by the Whites. Besides, what we want is plenty of food," "We are not here to eat our fill, but to fight!" said Samoilenko sharply. This stopped the men's grumbling.

For a while there was silence. Everybody seemed to be weighing Samoilenko's words. Then Denissov spoke. Leaning on his rifle, without raising his bent head, he said in a firm and sullen voice:

"I see we can't work together. Why did you come to fight? You should have stayed at home with your mother."

"Be careful what you say!" Samoilenko retorted angrily. "You're at headquarters, not in your Karantin quarries."

Samoilenko's voice was sharp and furious.

"It's no use quarreling," said Comrade Bragin.

Everybody stopped talking. The men liked to hear Bragin because of his calm and reasonable speeches.

"We've had enough talk, Comrade Samoilenko. More than enough. We've also had enough leniency. It's impossible in the conditions under which we fight. What's in your policy of leaving landlords alone? You must understand that we cannot seek the landlords' friendship. They can never be our friends. They are the masters of the White bands which we are fighting. In leaving landlords alone we strengthen the economic and fighting force of our enemies and weaken ourselves. What we must do is just the opposite."

"Leave your high politics alone," interrupted Samoilenko savagely.

"Comrades!" said Bragin, turning to the assembly. "There is nothing to fear. Comrade Samoilenko voices his own opinion. That is not a decision. The staff will take care to correct the errors of individual comrades. Our task is clear. We must improve our material position without delay."

"That's right!" shouted the chiefs.

"The same refers to the concentration of forces," Bragin concluded.

"Right, quite right!"

"No! It's wrong. We'll not allow this to be done. It will undermine the movement," yelled Samoilenko with renewed force. "We'll not let our forces be scattered!"

The discussion grew heated. All the comrades who spoke after that were against concentrated forces and for requisitioning horses and food from landlords. Only three members of the staff supported Samoilenko. In the midst of it, five partisans came in and asked for Denissov.

"The men are revolting. They say they don't want to be fed on herring."

The staff sent representatives to speak to the men; one of them was Garbulsky, a Party member since 1902. Before leaving, Denissov said:

"The highroad passes near the Karantin quarries. All the food transports travel over it. There, we can strike at the cursed devils at every moment, whereas the Ajimushkai quarries are behind the town. I have no wish to sit back and wait. What I want is fighting and fight I shall!"

"Forget your anarchist ideas," shouted Samoilenko threateningly. "You're not in your quarries. He who is against the staff is against the revolution."

"I'm not against the staff," growled Denissov. "I obey the staff, but I'll not do as you want. Your strategy doesn't suit me. I'm not afraid of your calling me a bandit. My only wish is to strike at the White dogs and that's easier

done from Karantin quarries. That's where they go past, so they cannot escape me. I won't allow anyone to stop me fighting the White dogs."

After that, Samoilenko endeavored to have Denissov outlawed. But Khovrin interrupted him harshly. He voiced the opinion of most of the Communists and active partisans, as was always the case in his rare speeches. He stood in the middle of the room and reproached Samoilenko in sonorous, ringing tones:

"You have not thought this over properly. You simply come out with the first thing that enters your head. We want the chief of our staff to approach all matters connected with the detachment in a Party spirit, cleverly and logically. But you are like Denissov, the way you talk. There's a pair of you."

"And where do you come from?" yelled Samoilenko. "There seems to be a lot of you clever people about!"

"Would you like us all to be fools?"

"I am the chairman of this staff. You deprive me of all independence."

"Oh, yes! I know you're a member of the staff. A member, mind you. We do not deprive you of your independence. On the other hand, neither do we renounce our right to take part in settling important questions connected with the detachment. Just bear that in mind, will you?" shouted Khovrin, with unexpected force. "We'll not let anyone dictate to us. The staff is no individual. It's a collective. It's our duty to set individual comrades right, no matter whether they belong to the rank and file or are members of the staff. And we are telling you now. Denissov has the support of part of the partisans. We stop all quarrels between him and headquarters. We've curbed him. And you go and accuse him of anarchism with your careless talk. That's a blow at Party administration."

"What does all this mean?" muttered Samoilenko between set teeth, as he sank on a stone seat.

"Nothing new. Questions must not be decided by you alone, but by the whole staff collectively. And each and all must struggle to have the resolutions of the staff carried out. Now, as regards concentration — what is your opinion, comrades? I think the best thing is to occupy three different quarries and strike at the whiteguards' rear from all three. This will create the impression that our forces are bigger than they really are. It will also be safe from a military point of view. It will be more difficult for them to blow up all three quarries than Ajimushkai, if we all stay here together."

"That's settled!" shouted the audience unanimously and firmly.

COLONEL KANYAYEV PAYS THE PARTISANS A VISIT

The partisans crawled out like moles to warm in the sun. Scattering over the nearby burial mounds, they climbed the Kings' Mound, in the neighborhood of the quarry, which had been the burial place of Greek kings and their war chiefs. There were rooms in the mound with sloping ceilings faced with polished stone, where the kings' treasures were laid together with their bodies.

All around was peaceful. The sea calm and blue. Mitridat mountain seemed quite close and the tiled roofs of the far villages could be seen amid the greenery of the countryside. The sky was a sapphire. There was the smell of holiday food in the air. Partisans on the Kings' Mound were singing. Many of their comrades had gone to Ajimushkai village to have fun with the girls. The old people asked them into their homes and offered them caster cake according to the custom.

The scouts posted on the mounds observed a motor car driving along the road towards the quarry.

Orders were given by the staff for it to be stopped. We looked on from the top of the mounds.

The car rushed into the village, flashing past the cottages which had been freshly whitewashed for the holiday. Two officers and two women sat in the car; an armed civilian stood on the running board on each side. The car slowed down and stopped in front of the main quarry entrance. Some of our comrades strolled over. We wondered if these officers and their women were holiday-makers or visitors come to give us caster greetings. Partisans came running to the spot from all sides, crowding about the new automobile with its bright nickel radiator and unknown passengers.

The head of our staff, Comrade Samoilenko, with Comrade Garbulsky and the staff secretary, Pasternak, approached the car, whose passengers sat as if turned to stone, while the two comrades, armed with revolvers, stood by.

Pasternak, the staff secretary, was a dark man of great bulk, aged about forty-five, a typical Caucasian with a big nose, thick lips, flabby face bearded to the eyes and wearing a long and extremely dirty coat — an intimidating figure of a man.

Some of the partisans joked him.

"Don't push to the front, Comrade Pasternak. You'll frighten them to death."

"They'll stand it," he rumbled in a deep bass voice. "They've seen worse."

When the partisans heard that these people were a colonel and his aide-de-camp with their wives, Whom the comrades had taken prisoners under Enikalye with plans of our quarries, they were ready to tear them to pieces.

"Down with counter-revolution! Beat them! Take off their epaulets! The gold-laced scoundrels! Carrying plans about! Planning your strategy, are you?"

"Comrades!" said Samoilenko, addressing the partisans. "Go back to your battalions. The staff will settle the case in accordance with the law and take the necessary steps."

The partisans trooped away, reluctantly.

"Please get out," continued Samoilenko, turning to the officers. "Give up all you have, including your arms."

The colonel muttered with trembling lips:

"Gentlemen — "

"We are not "gentlemen!" said Samoilenko, sharply.

"But, comrades! We have nothing," said the officers, snatching out their watches and cigarette cases.

"No," said Garbulsky. "Leave those in your pockets. We don't take that sort of thing. They are not war articles. Have you any military documents or

arms? Answer!"

"All our papers and documents are in this filing case," said the ensign in a trembling voice.

The women were fashionably dressed. They wore silk stockings, narrow, high-heeled shoes and were tightly corseted. They looked half dead with fear as they handed their silver vanity cases for examination. They were searched by a woman who was brought from the village for this purpose. Valuable military documents were taken from the officers, plans of the quarries of the whole Kerch region, arms and passports. The latter showed them to be "Colonel of the General Staff Kanyayev," and "Ensign Ivanov, aide-de-camp to Colonel Kanyayev." All valuables, money and clothes were returned to them. Ursatyev, who was the member of the staff on duty at the time, gave orders to take them under arrest into the quarry.

"Follow me!" Ursatyev told them.

The officers and their wives tottered into the quarry, their legs weak from fear. At the opening their eyes were bound. (This was the general practice with us. Even our own men had their eyes bound in the first days after they joined the detachment. This was done so that the new arrival should not get an idea of the plan of our tunnels.)

The colonel asked in a frightened voice:

"Gent — Comrades, I mean! What are you going to do with us? Please don't shoot us."

He clutched at his weeping wife.

Ursatyev tried to reassure them, telling them we had no thought of shooting them.

"You will be put by yourselves," he told them.

"But why do you bind our eyes?" asked the colonel's wife.

"We do that to all strangers," answered Ursatyev.

The women asked why.

"Our paths are secret," answered Ursatyev.

They were led into the depths of the quarry to the spot allotted to them. There they were given warm clothes. The motor car was also driven into the quarry, but by our own chauffeur.

The comrades who had escorted the prisoners were surrounded by a crowd of partisans, who sat on the grass, drinking in every word.

"Well," they told us, "we went for a walk with the girls, as we all do, you know. Naturally, where girls are the boys go. We were playing the accordion and dancing, and we had something to drink. Suddenly we heard a car coming. We looked up and saw officers and ballet girls in it. We were a bit startled. We thought they had come to look for deserters. The car drove a little way and turned. They got out and started to eat and drink, after that the officers climbed to the top of the mound and stood glancing towards the quarries and making notes on the maps they held in their hands. Then we guessed what they were after. So we managed to make a dummy bomb and, walking stealthily to the mound, shouted: "Hands up! Don't move or we'll throw this bomb at you! So they stood rooted to the spot."

"Why, you're heroes!" shouted the partisans. "Bravo! You captured them with your naked hands. You're great boys!"

And the partisans took hold of them and swung them up and down joyously.

Next morning the men filed out hurriedly with their rifles. It was eight o'clock. The staff had received news from town of the great excitement there. The Whites had arrested about a hundred workers and peasants from surrounding villages and locked them up in the fortress, holding them as hostages. The White staff had also called a conference with the town council, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries and the bureau of trade unions, at the head of which were also Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries.

That day, many reports came to our headquarters and at midday a delegation from Kerch arrived. One of them was the Cadet,* Sno. He was tall, thin, pale-faced, a respectable, hardened intellectual. He wore a brand new hat. The other was the Socialist-Revolutionary, Lidkevich, a pale man with a blue, unshaven face and spectacles. He was above average height, in civilian clothes, with a waisted jacket. A long cloak with metal buckles hung from his shoulders.

1) *Cadet — member of the Constitutional-Democratic Party.

These miserable men at the service of the White hangmen came to convince our revolutionary military staff that they were also for the liberation of the workers, against the bourgeoisie, only in a "sensible" spirit.

They stated the reason for their visit and handed over two letters, one from the head of the garrison, Khodakovsky; the other from the head of the secret service, Captain Stetsenko. The first promised peace if the officers were set free. The second demanded that the officers be set free immediately.

"Otherwise," wrote Stetsenko, "all the hostages will be shot tomorrow."

"I understand you," answered Garbulsky. "You're broken down whiteguard horses on which the generals ride. You've become voluntary victims of capitalism and militarism. You stand up to defend the working class," here he turned to the Socialist-Revolutionary, Lidkevich; "you think yourselves clever and devote your brains to "the good of mankind," culture, and the liberation of mankind from slavery." These are your empty phrases. In coming here you prove your meanness and treachery. You, as a Socialist-Revolutionary, didn't come here to rescue the workers pining in the fortress as hostages. You've only come here to set the officers, the tortures of the working class, free."

The abashed Socialist-Revolutionary tried to excuse himself.

"But we have come to set them free in order to save the workmen, who may be shot at any moment. We entreat you to let these officers go, so that the blood of innocent citizens shall not be shed. The Whites declare they will shoot thousands of workmen for every officer you kill. We cannot allow such violence to be done to peaceful inhabitants. You must understand the

trade unions, town council and other organizations are placed in a most difficult position. They also are in danger of being shot. Remember, the left wing of town council and trade union workers are also confined in the fortress as hostages."

"All right," answered Garbulsky. "We'll call a general meeting."

The men gathered until the great hollow near the main opening was crowded with people.

Comrades Samoilenko and Garbulsky climbed to the top of the wall of rocks. Samoilenko's voice rang out over the heads of the crowd:

"Comrades! A delegation has come from town, requesting the freedom of the officers we have arrested. We're going to discuss this question at a general meeting. The delegation shall speak first and tell us what it is they want." Voices were heard shouting: "Let's hear what they have to say!"

The tall, thin figure of the Socialist-Revolutionary with his eyeglasses, rose above the crowd. Hardly had he begun than there was general murmuring.

"He's one of them, not one of us. A white-collar man! We don't want that kind of delegate. He belongs to the nobles! Down with him! To the devil! He's one of them that picks up the noblemen's crumbs. P'raps he's a nobleman dressed up." "Comrades!" somebody shouted. "Don't be in such a hurry! Let's hear what he has to say. We must find out what he wants."

Garbulsky raised his hand and the crowd, which respected him, grew quiet. The Socialist-Revolutionary went on with his speech.

"Eighty workmen and peasants are held prisoners in the town," he began, in a soft, thin voice. "They are confined in the fortress, in danger of their lives, since the Whites threaten to shoot a thousand men for each one you shoot."

"Stop gassing, you worm! Tell us what you've come for!" roared the crowd. "What's this nonsense you talk? You lowdown scoundrel! Trying to frighten us, are you?"

Oaths and shouts drowned his thin, lonely voice.

"Down with him! Just look at this thin-legged traitor coming to get the better of us. An officer dressed as a civilian."

The prisoners were led out of the quarry.

Men, women, girls and old people came running from the village. They wore holiday clothes, bright-colored dresses and clean skirts, and moved with the crowd, eating sunflower seeds and gazing curiously at the prisoners. The partisans beside them made a contrast with their tired faces and dirty, miscellaneous clothes: army coats, sailors' jackets and shirts, all ragged and with long gleams of unwashed skin showing through.

There was a deathlike silence. Garbulsky stood alone on the limestone wall. All eyes focused on him, all ears strained to catch his words. Addressing the delegates, he spoke thus:

"You're wrong to call yourselves revolutionaries. The time is past when many believed you. You've heard the shouts of indignation addressed to you: 'Down! Get out of this, you rich men's lackeys!' We're gathered not to hear you explain who will bring us liberty. We know the Soviets alone will do that. Class struggle is so clear to everybody now that nobody can frighten the workers and peasants. They will struggle under any conditions until they sweep out all whiteguards, landlords, capitalists, to the very last man."

He then turned to the colonel.

"You see before you true martyrs. These are our revolutionary army. They don't spare their lives. They think nothing of the impossible conditions in which they find themselves. You show yourself as our class enemy. You proclaim, through your press, that we are bandits and highwaymen. If we were such we would have no consideration for you or the circumstances. I think, during your short stay among us, you've found us to be people who struggle for the toilers' rights, who act according to the revolutionary law. The White staff is resolved to kill thousands of peaceful citizens in exchange for your heads!"

He showed them the letter.

"They only await a signal. Present events have roused the feelings of all peaceful inhabitants in the town and its neighborhood. The Whites have already arrested eighty workers and peasants and continue arresting more and driving them to the fortress — the usual place of your executions. These events have also attracted the attention of these cowardly intellectuals."

He pointed to the delegates.

"They have taken upon themselves a mission; quite in their line, the mission of lackeys, who carry out the plans of the rich men and plunderers. The only thing that guarantees your life is our revolutionary conscience. And you, colonel, must do all in your power to have all peaceful inhabitants, now under arrest and who have no connection with us, set free. Tell your chiefs that their offers of peace are an old song which none of us wants to hear. Every one of us, down to the last man, is ready to die for the liberation of the workers. That is our battle slogan. The Red Army is near and coming to our assistance."

He was interrupted by shouts of "Hurrah! Hurrah! Long live the Red Amy!" And the partisans burst into a revolutionary battle song, a mighty song of courage and the will to die for freedom. They snatched off their caps and stood singing. The colonel also doffed his cap while his wife, who was weeping, dried the tears which welled up in her big eyes.

When the officers were ready to go, the staff told them that if the Whites failed to set the hostages free, the partisans would have recourse to merciless terrorism.

"We'll show no mercy," were Comrade Garbulsky's parting words.

THE BRITISH AND FRENCH WARSHIPS' EASTER PRESENT

Hardly had the delegates and the officers, whom we had set free, disappeared from view, when our scouts reported that the Whites were advancing from every direction in great force, infantry and cavalry both.

Our trumpet sounded.

"To arms! To arms!"

We rushed underground, returning in a moment with rifles and hurried into position for another bloody battle.

A loud, long-drawn voice was heard above the din:

"Special naval battalion! Follow me!"

And the battalion, dressed in torn sailors' jackets, trousers and round caps, lined up behind their commander, Alexeyev.

Alexeyev was a former midshipman of the old navy. He joined us with a large group of sailors and the staff appointed him to command a special naval battalion.

The commanders continued to give short orders to their battalions which, one after another, took up their posts on the surrounding burial mounds and in cottages, the main forces being grouped about the winding walls of limestone which surrounded the village. We awaited the advancing enemy in high nervous tension, our hearts beating fast.

Suddenly a shaft of light flashed in front, followed by a rumble as a big shell burst. It was so sudden that we all started nervously.

Then another hit the top of the Kings' Mound enveloping it in smoke so that pen's figures were invisible.

Followed a third, fourth, fifth, in quick succession. We stopped counting, for they burst too rapidly. We could just register lightning flashes and columns of thick brown smoke.

Meanwhile machine-guns and rifles were firing from the north, mingling with cries and shouts of "Hurrah!" The noise was deafening. All sounds merged into a general roar when, suddenly, a new shell exploded high in the air.

"Take care! Shrapnel!"

Something grunted in the air, a wheezy groan like a fat pig, as a heavy shell came over and burst.

The din mounted to a great roaring around us, shutting us in a sea of sound, a nerve-racking fury of noise which sometimes abated, leaving dirty columns of smoke which melted raggedly away.

The bombardment set fire to and demolished the cottages. A pall of smoke overhung everything; the Whites made repeated attempts to get at us but we repulsed them successfully.

The villagers abandoned their homes and cattle and, breaking through the fire and smoke, weeping and yelling, ran to the caves, where they hid.

During a lull in the bombardment, we heard wild shouts of triumph from the middle of the village. The Whites had broken through our lines and rushed in. We were in danger of being cut off.

Then the most desperate part of the battle began.

The partisans broke into the houses, where they barricaded themselves; threw bombs into the houses in possession of the enemy. After some hours of nightmare battle, we drove the Whites out of the village. Leaving their

wounded, they retreated to the railway track and neighboring factory where they reorganized for a new attack.

Just before nightfall the bombardment recommenced. The air was a storm of flame and explosions through which could be heard the screams of the wounded. Under cover of their naval artillery, the Whites came directly up to our lines and opened a murderous fire with machine-guns. To avoid heavy losses we retreated into the quarries and fired from under cover, while the Whites looted the village. They took everything and left the village late at night, retreating to a distance. We knew they would attack again in the morning, to keep us besieged in the quarry.

At dawn, we sent out scouts and, placing our machine-guns, waited under cover near the mouth of the quarry. We lay down in a line, feeling very sleepy, yawning, trembling nervously because of the exhausting strain, but looking intently towards the enemy.

The scouts reported the Whites' advance. They came in a double line very quietly, without a word of command being heard, evidently intending to get close enough to post their machine-guns again over our heads.

We let them approach to within about seventy feet and opened fire all along the front, with rifles and machine-guns, shattering their line. Then we rushed out and attacked them. We cut through them. They retreated. Then they sent against us a detachment of about three hundred young recruits, lads from the middle schools. We let them come close to the village. Then we attacked them on three sides. They started to run, with us in pursuit. . . .

The surrounding country was littered with dead and wounded. The corpses, left unburied, quickly putrefied in the heat of the sun; horrid messes of worms and flies. The stench of putrefaction was everywhere.

Villagers and partisans carried the wounded off and buried the swollen bodies. The well-to-do inhabitants decided that Ajimushkai was no place to live in and drove off to other villages on the shores of the Azov sea, taking away what remained of their cattle and other property. The poor and middle peasants carried their rags and household belongings into the quarries, took possession of some of the tunnels, drove their cattle into them and settled

themselves underground with us, resigned to all the hardships of living in common with their poultry and animals.

After that hard battle there was another respite. The partisans were able to have food and climbed again to the tops of the burial mounds, where they lay down in the grass to rest and amuse themselves.

Suddenly a burst of laughter, shouts, whistling and catcalls went up. Hundreds of hands were clapped.

"Look boys! What's this? The cave monkey's coming out!"

"Where are you going to, frightening good people!"

"Mitya, Mitya! Come here!"

Thus the partisans welcomed the appearance of their favorite wit, the secretary of the revolutionary military staff, the huge and ragged sailor, Pasternak.

Mitya Pasternak, good-humoured and grim, took out a paper he had written and read aloud a poem he had composed about a priest, the easier holidays, the English interventionists, weak minded Socialist-Revolutionaries and the way the White dogs had run from us at Ajimushkai. The partisans laughed uproariously and applauded him. Then they shouted for Khovrin, another favorite.

"Khovrin! Khovrin! Let's have a song."

Khovrin, whose face was swathed in bandages, sang their favorite song in his sweet tenor voice.

It had been composed during their long night watches, to the motive of "Blue Sea," the Communards, "the eagles of freedom" going to battle, their hard fate in the past, the new and wonderful era opening before them. It closed with the words:

"Come to us proletarians. ... see the stars that shine on our banners!"

So ended that spring day which had been full of death.

BACK TO STARY-KARANTIN

Denissov received a report from the Stary-Karantin quarries that over fifty newly joined partisans had collected there and that regiments and baggage trains of the retreating Whites were moving continually past Karantin, along the highroad leading from the Akmonai front. Denissov again asked the staff to let his detachment go back from Ajimushkai to Stary-Karantin.

This time the staff agreed and appointed Comrade Bragin commissar of the detachment.

We set out for our long march on a fine warm night, bright stars overhead, a strong smell of earth and springtime in our nostrils. The whole district was asleep, sweetly quiet, when we halted for a ten minutes' rest. We marched on again, along the shortest route. We passed the villages of Bulganak and Katerlez on the south side, past the old station and through the Jewish cemetery.

The stars began to pale. Dawn broke. A fresh wind blew in from the sea. By daylight we were once more on the territory of Stary-Karaatin.

The church bell was pealing in the village. The cottages stood half hidden in abundant greenery. A big passenger steamer with smoking funnels glided down the river.

At midday (April 16) a conference was called, followed by a general meeting of partisans to elect a staff and rename the detachment. We chose a staff of three: chairman, Vladimir Fedyayev (tobacco worker, ex-chairman of the tobacco workers' trade union), Victor Nazarov (metal worker, an active trade union worker) and Mesrobyana (metal worker).

The commanders also formed part of the staff. Denissov remained head of the detachment, Odudenko was battalion commander and Gregory Denissov, commissary. The detachment was named "Soviet Regiment of Stary-Karantin Quarries."

"Well, Vassily!" someone asked Denissov. "Have you any objections?"

"It's none of my business," Denissov replied with an indifferent shrug. "You attend to it. I'll do my work when the time comes."

He hardly took any part in the election, sitting sunk in thought and making notes in a book. But then, he never was a talkative man.

Naturally, Bragin, who had been appointed commissar by the revolutionary military staff, was warned that our commander, Denissov, must be handled carefully.

The staff was aware of Denissov's influence over the detachment which was formed almost entirely of peasants. They also knew that Denissov was stubbornly headstrong and that Bragin's task was rather difficult. He had to see that the detachment worked for the common good and do it without irritating Denissov. More, he had to subject Denissov to his influence without Denissov being aware of it, to struggle against his stubbornness, his self-will and self-conceit.

The staff began its daily routine.

A conference was called. In consideration of our experience at Bagyerovo and Stary-Karantin quarries, when we were besieged and in danger of death by starvation, the staff resolved that we must lay in a stock of food and barrels of water. It was also decided to carry on agitation and political work in the fortress, among the mobilized soldiers and "the French," as we called the soldiers who had returned from France.

Comrade Perepelitsa, member of the town nucleus, was entrusted with the latter work, he being an exceptionally brave man who was already doing secret work in the fortress. There were also a few other comrades working secretly among the White soldiers and in White departments.

The next days were busy ones. The partisans prepared a supply of water and the landlords and kulaks of neighboring villages were given orders to deliver flour or grain at the quarry. A requisitioning commission of two comrades, P. Boychevsky and N. Moisseyenko, was appointed to confiscate

state property and other things. Another requisitioning party was sent to the estates of the landlord Olive. The latter party was led by the famous Tartar rider, Alva, who confiscated a few score of the best horses and brought them to the quarry.

A regular connection with the town was established through Comrades Perepelitsa and Vassily Khrony. They both kept in touch with us and gave us vital information about the disposition of the White forces. From the moment the staff was organized, Party influence over the partisans grew and, although the commanders were the same, the initiative was transferred in a large measure to the staff.

Early in the morning of April 17 (old style) in the quiet hour of dawn, our scouts reported the approach of cavalry driving a herd of cattle.

"How many?" Denissov questioned.

"About a hundred lances."

"Any infantry?"

"No, cavalry only."

Denissov and Bragin climbed on a mound and saw the cavalry turning off the main road, toward the hollows, in an attempt to escape notice.

"Odudenko!" said Denissov to the battalion commander. "Take seventy men and go behind that mound over there. But mind you let them come near enough. You, Yushko, go to that other mound and make your men lie down. We'll get them under a cross fire."

We took up the positions, determined to wipe out the slowly moving cavalry who, through the field glasses, were seen to have the uniform of a Cossack regiment. We lay close, breathlessly silent, waiting for them to approach.

We let them come until we could distinguish their faces. Handsome Cossacks in Caucasian coats and large black cloaks with gleaming white

epaulets rode in front. They came along easily, a thin stream of light blue smoke rising from their cigarettes.

Our hearts beat fast as we took aim, waiting for the word of command.

"Battalion! Fire!" shouted our commander in a stentorian voice.

We poured lead into them.

The officers started, surprised and fearful, turning their horses in panic.

Their ranks broke; riders flopped heavily to the ground. Horses reared, men yelled; the whole regiment, unmindful of shouted commands, galloped off in disorder, working their whips furiously on their horses' flanks, while we held them under a deadly cross fire. We would have shot them all, but for a large hollow in which those who remained alive took shelter.

Our cavalry galloped after them and brought in four prisoners, as well as saddles, horses and other trophies, including the herd of oxen which the Cossacks were conveying to town for the needs of the army.

"Oh!" shouted the partisans, on seeing the cattle. "That's the kind of prisoners we want! You set to milking, Garaska; you're good at milking."

"Yes, I can milk all right, but what shall I milk? Where's your eyes, you idiots! They're bullocks. Can't you tell a bullock from a cow?"

There was laughter and merriment; the men started to sing comic songs.

A RAID ON THE FORTRESS

On April 19 the staff discussed military action. Comrade Ursatyev was sent by the revolutionary military staff to arrange a joint advance from various points. The intention was to create a serious panic among the Whites, in the hope of weakening their front at Akmonai isthmus by making them draw off men to increase their strength against us partisans. This would help the regular Red Army to strike a blow at Akmonai.

Comrade Perepelitsa also came to this conference of our staff and with him the sailors through whom we used to get information, reports from Moscow and from the front. They could not remain among the Whites any longer as they were in danger of being arrested and shot. They brought us a valuable present, a double telescope, which they handed over to the staff. They also reported that two battalions of mobilized soldiers in Kerch fortress were ready to revolt.

Comrade Ursatyev, delegated by the revolutionary military staff, spoke first:

"Individual action of one section, or detachment, may lead to a rapid defeat and will not yield the results we might expect, since the enemy may center all his forces against one detachment and afterwards besiege the quarries separately. The revolutionary military staff has instructed me to consult with this staff and with your commanders so that, every time you plan an attack, you let us know the details. Should you, for example, attack Kerch fortress, we must simultaneously prepare to attack the railway station, while other detachments attack other points. This will divert the enemy's attention."

No criticisms were offered. All the comrades agreed.

Our staff decided, in the circumstances, to take advantage of the situation, to get into the fortress and raise the revolt within its walls.

Denissov was against the attack.

"It's not a bad idea," he said; "but this is not the proper time for it. The plan is not worked out properly. We must study it further. The passive attitude of the White soldiers is not reassuring. They could disarm their officers and take possession of the fortress of their own accord."

"They need an impulse," Nazarov, a member of the staff, argued. "They need to be led."

"We can send some experienced comrades," grumbled Denissov, "and let them direct the movement. If anything happens we'll be on the spot."

"No," said Nazarov irritably. "We must start by storming the fortress. We must begin proceedings and send comrades into the fortress. While they are preparing the way, we'll occupy the main entrances."

"That's right!" echoed the comrades. "Nazarov is right. We must occupy the main entrances, take formal possession of them and, even if the garrison does not revolt, the Whites will fall into a panic and surrender."

"And what then?" retorted Denissov. "We can't do anything with the forces we have. These White soldiers are leading us into a trap."

"There's no trap," chorused Nazarov, Bragin and Fedyayev. "We'll be able to set free and arm the soldiers who have returned from France. They'll be ready, for they have the revolutionary spirit."

"I don't agree with this step," said Denissov stubbornly. "We can't storm a fortress with such a small number of men. We're likely to lose the whole detachment."

"That's right," confirmed Odudenko. "This is no way to fight. War proceedings are no joke. We know how a war should be carried on. We're sufficiently versed in military matters. We refuse to lead men to a certain death. Not a man would be left alive."

"We must undertake military action," said Nazarov, "so that no disaster happens. We must not only be versed in military tactics, but also in battle strategy. The staff knows what it is doing. There's a chance for us to secure victory and crush the Whites. The Red Army will strike on one side and we on the other. We must march this very day."

Bragin, Fedyayev, Nazarov and a few other comrades were in favor of making the attack. Perepelitsa was most insistent of all, since he had been doing secret work in the fortress.

"Friends!" he said. "We'll make a mess of it unless we are unanimously agreed. That's what we have to fear more than the attack itself."

At that moment a report came in that Voronkov, in command of Platoon No. 2, had run away with a list of the platoon.

Everybody was astounded.

Denissov took advantage of it to say:

"There can be no question of attacking now. He'll betray the regiment."

To which Nazarov answered in sharp reproach:

"He should not have been appointed to command a platoon and entrusted with hundreds of men."

Denissov retorted irritably:

"I appointed him because he was an ex-Red Army man."

To ascertain the men's spirit, the staff called a general meeting of the partisans, at which the members of the staff explained their plan of attack on the fortress. Our detachment consisted of brave men who did marvels in battle. There was not a faint-hearted or weak-willed man among us. Such were impossible in our detachment in our hard circumstances. When they heard about the attack, the majority declared for immediate action.

Denissov, however, refused to obey the staff and did not take part in the attack upon the fortress, handing over the command to Odudenko, our battalion commander, while he himself remained in the quarry with twenty partisans.

It was past eleven o'clock that night when the detachment, more than two hundred strong and commanded by Odudenko, advanced upon the fortress. We went silently through the dark, over uneven ground. A thick mist enveloped us and a light drizzle fell continually. Shouldering our rifles, we marched in lines four deep, along a road past innumerable mounds, crevices and rocks which, in the dark, looked like enormous ruins.

As we approached the fortress, we turned off through a field to the light, sending out scouts and moving with special care, quietly, in a scattered line.

Perepelitsa led the way and pointed out the fortress gates through which we must enter. He assured us everything was prepared within; the sentries were warned, the password obtained, the soldiers provided with a machine-gun. We proposed to occupy the main gate first.

At that moment, a steamer ran aground near the fortress, due to the thick fog, and signaled for help. It screeched as if to warn us.

Our scouts reported that we were within a little distance of the north gate. The scouts were instructed to relieve the sentinels. All had been prepared to this effect and we knew the password.

The scouts came up to the gates.

"Who are you?" asked the White sentries.

"Friends."

Our men gave the password, "dawn," which had been given us. The Chechentsy, who had replaced the soldiers after Voronkov had given warning, shouted triumphantly:

"Dawn," is it? Take this then!" and opened fire.

Our hearts jumped.

Volley after volley was fired. Machine-guns opened fire from within the fortress.

The alarm was sounded, trumpets blew, bells rang and a big gun spoke heavily.

We noticed that the firing was strongest on the eastern side and that shots came at random from the sea. Evidently, the Whites did not know who we were. We also heard firing in other parts of the fortress.

We were afraid of being surrounded and, as dawn was beginning to break, we decided to retreat. Soaked by the heavy mist, we marched back over the uneven ground and reached the quarries in safety.

RUNAWAYS

It was morning. The sun shone and the air was full of the scent of flowers. Mitridat mountain looked formidably big in its coating of green. The bay was smoothly blue. Little cottages showed us bright white spots at the foot of the mountain.

Men swarmed in the town and round the bay.

The range of hills, which stretched in the neighborhood of the quarry, was a mass of bright green and blue-green foliage.

The Red partisans had left their catacombs and were warming themselves in the sunlight, cleaning their arms in preparation for new battles.

We lay on the top of the highest mound, examining the country by turns through the telescope.

The conversation ran on various questions connected with domestic economy. One bewailed his cow, another his house, and so on. The fishermen grew excited at the thought that it was high time for drying their nets. And all listened hopefully to the heavy artillery fire which thundered distantly in the neighborhood of Akmonai.

Presently a mounted partisan was seen galloping along the road. Bending low over his horse he approached the mound.

"Comrade commander! An officer has run away from the Whites and come to join us. He begs to be brought before the staff."

"Bring him here!"

The man galloped off and after a while returned with a young boy who held a pair of ensign's epaulets in his hand.

"Take him to the staff," ordered platoon commander Yushko, who was present.

The officer was led under escort to headquarters.

He told his story to the staff.

"I have just been promoted to the rank of ensign. I got my officer's epaulets this morning and my salary— three hundred rubles. Here they are." He handed Comrade Nazarov a wad of bills and a pair of new gold epaulets with a single star. "Perhaps you'll want them? I have no use for them. My brother has been in the Red Army since the beginning of the revolution. I shall not go against the revolution and the workers either. I am with you, comrades! Let me be one of you. I wanted to run away and join you long ago, but had not the chance. Today, I heard that Voronkov had run away from you; so I decided to counterbalance that by running away from the Whites. He is now a secret service spy. He stops carts at the town gates and identifies the peasants who used to come to you. Many have been arrested already."

The officer was accepted. He was watched at first, but he proved to be an active partisan and remained in our ranks.

That night I was standing with another comrade at the entrance to the quarry.

Everybody was asleep. We were gazing up with wonder at the star-strewn heavens, admiring the Great Bear which shone brightly above us.

All of a sudden a man's silhouette loomed in the dusk. We strained our eyes to get a better look. The man came towards us.

We got our rifles ready.

"Comrades, I want to speak to you."

"Who are you?" we asked.

"I'm a workman. I've brought some rifles for you."

"For whom?"

"For the partisans in this quarry."

"Come up."

We let him approach and called the partisan who was on duty inside.

He took the rifles and cartridges the man had brought and led him into the passage. There were five rifles and a few cartridges.

We had a good look at the new arrival. He seemed little more than a boy, with a childish face. His hands were white. He was trembling, either with cold or fear. We examined the rifles with suspicion and asked: "Did you actually walk all the distance from town with this load?"

He answered awkwardly:

"Yes, from town. I'm very strong. I could carry double that load."

"What's your name?"

"Bredsky. I'm a workman."

The partisan on duty took him to headquarters.

"Looks suspicious," said my comrade, when they had gone. "I don't believe he carried the rifles and cartridges all the distance from town. Doesn't look as if he could."

"He looks too tender for a workman," I added.

In the morning the partisans hurried to the openings to get warm.

Bredsky was led out, too.

"Come out, boys! Who's for an "excursion?"

An "excursion" meant examination of new arrivals. The partisans filed out, laughing and talking.

Bredsky sat apart, warming himself in the sun; he was blue with cold. A sailor who had joined us recently sat down beside him and asked, while he looked at him closely:

"Are you cold, friend?"

"A little," answered Bredsky, his teeth chattering.

"And where have you been working?"

"In a shop. I've done all sorts of jobs, but mostly I've worked as a laborer," answered Bredsky, looking down. "Is this an examination? Don't fear, I'm a friend."

The sailor waited a while, then vanished.

After a time he came back with another partisan, Pavel Ovchinnikov.

The latter glanced at Bredsky and nodded to the sailor.

They both went immediately to the staff and reported that they had identified Bredsky — he was an agent of the secret service.

Bredsky was taken before the staff where he played the innocent, asking in an excited voice: "What do you mean by this? Who do you take me for?"

"Don't get uneasy," said the sailor who had identified him.

Nazarov looked hard at Bredsky.

"What did you come here for?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" returned Bredsky with a wry smile.

"I've come to fight."

"Against whom?"

"Why do you ask? Against the Whites, of course."

"And besides — ?"

Bredsky lost countenance.

"My God! I've told you already — against the Whites."

"But you're an agent of their secret service?"

"What do you mean? What right have you to say that?"

"Do you know these men?" asked Nazarov, pointing to Ovchinnikov and the sailor.

"I don't."

"But they have good reason for knowing you."

"You don't know me, you say?" shouted the sailor. "When I was in prison, who was it beat me up? And you don't know him either, eh?" said he, pointing to Ovchinnikov.

Bredsky was silent.

"Mum, are you? You deserve to be shot, you son of a bitch!" yelled the sailor in a savage voice, raising his fist.

Nazarov held back the hand raised over Bredsky's head and said:

"No, no. Leave him alone. Let him make a clean breast of it."

Bredsky's face grew white. He suddenly went down on his knees and begged for mercy.

He admitted having worked in the secret service, saying that he was a pupil of the middle school and had been handsomely bribed to work in our

detachment.

Anxious to propitiate the staff, he slit open the lining of his long coat and took out a document which confirmed his being sent for work connected with the liquidation of our partisan detachment.

"So that's who you are, my friend! The thing is clear now."

"Take him away," said the chairman.

The escort looked at him meaningfully.

"Surely, surely, comrades, you don't need to be told? ..."

The escort laid hold of Bredsky and dragged him away through the tunnel.

A moment later, we heard the muffled report of a shot.

WE ABDUCT AN ENGINEER

Vassily Khrony arrived from the town nucleus to tell us that some military engineer had come to Kerch, who was chief of the sapping party which had blown up the Petrovsk quarries. He was an inventor and had discovered a new way of blowing up quarries. The old method used six or eight satchels of dynamite. This expert obtained the same result with one satchel. Having destroyed Petrovsk quarries he was to start upon the destruction of the Ajimushkai and Stary-Karantin quarries.

The staff decided to abduct him, lest he blow up our refuge. Three men were appointed from our detachment and Vassily Khrony joined them. We set out for Kerch in a phaeton at about ten o'clock at night, abducted the engineer from his lodgings in Constantine Street and brought him back with us to Stary-Karantin.

This is how it was done:

Khrony walked to the front door. He wore a technicians' brown uniform with a military jacket. As the engineer came out, Khrony said:

"I have just come from the fortress. You are to go there immediately on urgent business. The quarries have been attacked and General Tregubov wants you at once."

"And who are you?" asked the engineer.

"I am the technician attached to the staff of the fortified region under General Tregubov. May I telephone the staff garage?" said Khrony, making believe he was glancing round for a telephone.

"There is no telephone in this apartment, unfortunately," answered the engineer, while he put on a khaki-colored jacket with wide epaulets.

"No matter, we'll drive up to the commandant and take a car there."

The engineer donned a heavy canvas coat.*

We were standing near the phaeton when the front door opened and he came out accompanied by Khrony.

"Will you be comfortable in this phaeton, colonel?" Khrony asked.

Darkness had already fallen.

The colonel had no time to answer, for two of us took out our revolvers and held them under his nose. At the same time a revolver clicked behind and Khrony said, in a steely voice:

"Not a word! You are arrested."

We seized the bewildered colonel's arm, took his Browning from him and marched him to the quarries, while Khrony, in his technician's cap, drove away in the phaeton.

He was a stubborn man. He would not even speak to us, or ask where he was being taken to, but kept sighing heavily, now and then swearing to himself because he had been so smartly hoodwinked.

He was shot soon after.

WE WRECK THE BARRACKS

Two days later, the staff received information that a regiment, made up of officers and cadets only, had arrived in town. We decided to attack them.

So, on the night of April 24 a scouting party, headed by Bragin, drove in two log carts to the Bosphorus barracks, near the lime kilns on the outskirts of the town. We left the carts, walked to within a short distance of the barracks and lay down. Three of the comrades went to take the sentinels off, but before they reached the gates, they came upon two officers.

Our men shouted "Halt!" One of the officers snatched out his revolver and wounded partisan Melikhov in both legs. Hearing the shot and shouting Bragin gave the order to advance.

We moved stealthily until we came to the barracks windows, which were level with the ground and convenient for throwing in bombs. We hurled about ten of them together through the windows. There was a crash and clatter of broken glass and explosions; then pandemonium from within, lights flashing, shouts, yells, curses, groans.

Our bombs had fallen in the middle of a crowd of whiteguards asleep on the floor. They jumped up only to stagger and fall down again. After that we threw one bomb at a time, using German bombs, which exploded with a dull sound. The roof collapsed in several places; the barracks was completely broken up. We picked up the wounded Melikhov and retreated. Frantic firing began in all parts of the town. The panic was such that the whiteguards started firing at each other and a good, stiff battle between them lasted throughout the night.

The odd thing was that we drove away in our carts unmolested, with only one man wounded, and reached the quarry in safety.

WE SET THE STATION ON FIRE

To intensify the Whites' panic and disintegrate their rearguard, the staff decided to attack Kerch railway station where trains, filled with retreating whiteguards, had collected.

At eleven p.m., a scouting party commanded by Bragin marched out over the steppe in the direction of Kerch station which it reached by two o'clock.

We lay down in a line, armed to the teeth. A number of trains were in the station; locomotives puffed, hissed and whistled. There were cars loaded with war munitions on every track. Engines were maneuvering in all directions, while the switch-men whistled shrilly to one another.

Comrade Bragin and two of the partisans entered the station building; the rest remained outside, ready.

As the three partisans reached the middle of the station, they saw two officers, one of whom was asleep, the other reading. They bayoneted the man who was reading and hurried to the first-class waiting room. A sentry stood at the door. Bragin pointed his revolver at him.

Suddenly there was shouting: "To arms! The bandits are here!"

The partisans threw bombs into the first-class waiting room, which was filled with whiteguards asleep on the floor.

At the same time Kossenko, a sailor, chief of our scout detachment, commanded:

"To the station, at a run!"

The partisans ran.

"Get your bombs ready!"

"Throw your bombs into the windows!"

Shattered glass and explosions.

Fire was immediately opened from the trains; shooting mingled with the roar of our bombs.

The partisans shouted and, after bombing the middle of the station, charged across the track to the cars which were filled with whiteguards newly arrived from the Akmonai front. Getting close to the wagons they threw bombs into the windows amid a terrific hubbub of firing, groans, screams, yells.

Indescribable panic reigned in the station building. Some of the Whites ran straight into the partisans' hands, some took cover and rattled off their machine-guns.

At dawn we reluctantly dropped the battle. We had to get back to the quarry, about three miles from the station, while it was still dark. If the Whites had seen our small numbers they would have been able to surround and kill us to a man.

The command was whispered down the line. We turned about to the left and began to withdraw under heavy fire.

Some of the comrades in their excitement got away from the detachment, and could not go back to Stary-Karantin quarries. They went to Ajimushkai instead. Comrade Bragin was one of them.

Partisan Ivan Drozdov nearly fell into the enemy's hands. He was cut off from our detachment, but jumped on a horse and galloped off to Ajimushkai. In the dark he chanced on a White detachment. He did not lose his head, but shouted at them reproachfully in a loud voice, with the accompaniment of choice oaths:

"Here you are asleep, you devils, while we can — !"

"Where?" asked the enemy.

"Over there!" and he pointed to the garden.

The whiteguards spurred their horses and galloped off in the direction of the garden.

Drozdov reached Ajimushkai.

The rest of us retreated to the Stary-Karantin quarries.

On the following night a body of our men were sent to the estate of Pospolitak, which lay near Sultanovka village, seven miles from the quarry. The Whites there were taken unawares. We also seized a baggage train and munitions.

The same night other parties of us extinguished four lighthouses, which we also damaged, taking away the equipment and about a hundred cans of petrol, all of which was brought to the quarry.

Moreover, all roads and villages within six miles of the quarry were cleared of the enemy. Our cavalry detachments daily arrested parties of whiteguards and their baggage trains. Daily we made successful raids through the territory, inflicting much damage and impairing the enemy's morale.

THE PHAETON

One day our observer saw, through his field glasses, a phaeton with three horses abreast being driven rapidly down the road. The commander of the detachment was informed. He called to one of the partisan horsemen.

"Tell the cavalry chief to send ten good horsemen, well mounted, to ride in pursuit."

"All right, comrade commander," shouted the partisan joyously, rapidly disappearing behind the rocks.* A few minutes later, a score of partisans were on their horses spurring them in hard pursuit of the phaeton, whose driver, becoming aware of the pursuit, lashed his steeds furiously.

But he could not escape our horsemen.

"They've caught him! They've caught another of the snakes. No chance to get away from our boys," the partisans shouted. "Bring him here!"

The man in the phaeton was the officer and landlord, Franchesko, known to and hated by many of the partisans who had once worked on his estate.

He sat alone in the carriage, a middle-aged* man, thin and black, casting frightened glances to right and left. The partisans surrounded him jeering:

"We know the rotter."

"He's a madman, a drunkard."

"Dirty boozer!"

The officer sat with bowed head, glancing sideways at the clamant partisans. He turned to the commander of the detachment, saying, in a low voice:

"What do you intend to do with me? Are you going to shoot me?"

"We'll shoot you if necessary."

"I beg you not to do that. I can be of use to you. I have food, horses and cattle on my estate. I can supply you if you set me free," he entreated.

"Oh, we'll take them ourselves, if we need them. D'you see these fifty young sheep browsing? We took them half an hour ago. They were your sheep!" laughed Denissov.

"Mine — but how did you take them?"

Very simply. We saw a man driving sheep, so we asked him, "Whose are they? Franchesko's?" "Yes," he answered. Where are you driving them to? "To the town for sale." If that's the case, we'll buy them for our detachment, and we drove them into the quarries. The herdsman tried to argue at first. "I mustn't do that without my master's consent," he said. That doesn't matter, your master will be here presently!

You see, we had an inkling that you would be paying us a visit," continued Denissov still laughing.

"Yes, damn it!" said the officer. "It all came off pat."

A MIX UP WITH COSSACKS

It was a fine spring day. The sea lay calm and blue, dotted here and there with white sails. Taman station, which lay in the Kuban, could be clearly seen on the other side of the strait. A carpet of soft green covered the earth. The day was sweet with odors, and the warm air blew in little gusts and eddies, A gentle day with no promise of the doom it carried.

The first excitement was a cavalry patrol riding down the highroad, two miles from the quarry. Probably there were fifty Whites. As we watched them they disappeared into a deep gully. Our cavalry and a cart with armed partisans were dispatched, under Denissov's command, to catch them. The mounted partisans galloped rapidly away, leaving the cart at a great distance behind. They had almost reached the highroad and were heading for a hill which stood at some distance aside, when a Cossack detachment suddenly rode out from behind the hill. They took our horsemen for their own, since a number of our fellows were wearing Cossack caps, coats and long felt cloaks — and rode together with them. It was necessary to warn the comrades in the cart. So one of the partisans offered the Cossack who rode beside him, to race him as far as the hill. He whipped his horse and galloped off out of view of the main body, the Cossack following behind.

Three of the comrades galloped after them. As soon as they came near enough, the partisans waved to those who were in the cart and the latter, understanding the danger, turned about and drove back at top speed. The Cossack evidently felt he had been caught, but had no time to look around, for one of the partisans snatched out his sword and struck him a blow on the head. The Cossack fell from his horse without a cry.

The three partisans, one by one, rejoined the group of Cossacks.

Meanwhile, a large body of White cavalry, which was evidently moving from the Akmonai positions to engage the partisans in battle, also came on the scene. The situation was dark and desperate.

"Follow me!" Denissov commanded. Spurring his horse he galloped off after the cart.

The Cossacks galloped with us, unaware of anything unusual.

"Slash them down!" shouted Denissov and the partisans' swords flashed in the air.

The Cossacks lost their heads, unable to understand what was the matter. Many of them were cut down. Others fled in a panic to the large detachment of White cavalry, which had already scattered and was galloping after our partisans.

The horses, necks outstretched, with their riders bending low in the saddle, appeared on a background of light sky ; now they vanished in the darkness of the pass.

"Down into the gully! Quick!" shouted the partisans.

"Whip up your horses!" they shouted to the driver of the cart.

As our men reached the Olivensk quarries, the whole partisan detachment was already lying in a line, getting ready to meet the White cavalry with a good volley.

THE WHITES ADVANCE

The White machine-guns began their vicious spitting, the rifle fire grew hotter and hotter. These new regiments which had not hitherto fought against us came savagely to the attack. But the partisans quenched their spirit. We were so hardened in battle that nothing could daunt us.

The Whites then drew off and waited for reinforcements which they knew were coming.

By noon we had many White regiments against us, including the Alexeyevsky, Markovsky, 2nd Punitive Cavalry Regiment and the Machine-Gun School. They had been much battered on the Akmonai front, but still numbered up to two thousand all told. They encircled us at a safe distance and awaited the signal to attack.

A few torpedo-boats moved from the jetty into the middle of the bay, slowly, giving parting signals, murderous-looking gray beasts.

"They're serious, this time! We're going to get it hot. We'll have to go underground again."

But we wanted to keep on the surface. It was hard to have to crawl back into the blind darkness of that sepulcher.

Having dug trenches, the Whites began to advance at a run, tripping against stones and firing as they came. We gave them volley after volley. A gray human wave was rolling up around us. Their artillery opened fire from the ships.

The earth shook with the rapid explosion of shell which blew the stonemasons' tiny cottages from the rocks on which they stood. Great dark columns of smoke rose in the air after each shell, which left big funnel-shaped holes in the earth.

Shrapnel shrieked overhead and machine-guns of every kind and size rattled deafeningly. The battle lasted several hours. Under this continuous destructive hammering we were obliged, by evening, to retreat into the quarry.

We retired hurriedly under the enemy's onslaught. In our haste some of our fellows happened to get into different passages and were isolated from each other. Forty-two men of the detachment found themselves in an old gallery.

I was among them.

AGONY UNDERGROUND

Forty-two men and eleven horses. We were driven underground, surrounded by the enemy and cut off from our comrades. We had no food save scraps in the saddle bags. Three women were with us, wives of the partisans, one of them Denissov's wife with their baby; the other two women were pregnant.

The Whites, seeing that we were in a trap, decided to destroy us by dynamite, using eight satchels of it at time.

"This is bad rock," said the partisans to each other. "If they start to blow it up, it will be the end of us."

"Yes, comrades," said a stonemason. "That old rock has been abandoned long ago, because the stone is bad. It crumbles under the touch."

"You know every corner, you old mole, so find us some blind alley where we shall be safe from the explosions."

"The blind alleys here are short and narrow, and full of rubble."

It was very cold and damp in the galleries. Drops of water hung in places from the ceiling. We were in a way glad of this; we could at least appease our thirst.

After half an hour underground we were unbearably cold. We ran up and down the gallery to get warm, for we were all lightly clad on account of the sun being so hot outside. We had been in a sweat when we came in which made us feel still colder; and we had not even any straw.

We wandered about in the pitch darkness full of the gloomiest forebodings.

All did duty as sentinels. We had not enough men for three shifts, as we had to guard a number of openings. I was on duty for the second time early next morning.

It was a fine morning. I could see the blue sky and hear birds singing. How I longed to get out into the warm sun for a breath of fresh spring air!

But the birdsong mingled with the thud of picks and spades striking the rock over our heads, the shouts and oaths of the White officers.

Apparently they were digging everywhere and unloading great quantities of dynamite which was brought up in carts.

We were acutely depressed. There was little chance for us in the decrepit old galleries. It was a question if our precarious shelter would stand an explosion.

The hope that our main forces (still over two hundred men) would make a sally at night kept up our spirits. When, at times, the firing grew hotter, our hope of release grew; we expected our men to come at any moment to set us free.

The first explosions occurred at about ten in the morning, shaking the earth and raising a whirlwind of dust. The sentries near the openings were struck with strong air currents and covered from head to foot with limestone. It shrouded all of us in gray; our faces were like gray masks, with deeper layers of dust on our beards and in the hollows of our wrinkles. We looked like a crowd of old millers.

The results of the explosions were dreadful. The openings over which the explosions had taken place were unrecognizable; great boulders blocked them and a faint light fell through the hole blown in the roof.

And we heard the sound of more digging over our heads, more kegs of explosives being rolled, preparations for new explosions . . .

The damp chilled us to the bone and rusted our rifles.

"We're in for it!" we said to one another.

"I told you these quarries were rotten," said the stonemason in a hollow voice after our inspection. "The main detachment is in good ground, in a

big quarry where the explosions can't get through. The rocks are thirty or more yards thick there; tunnels a mile and a half long. White rock is such that nothing will ever break it. Some of the tunnels in that quarry pass under the cemetery and Stary-Karantin village, even under the sea, and the rock is nearly a hundred yards thick. They'll not even hear the explosions down there.

"If only we could get out of this"

Other explosions in various places followed almost without interruption and gave the sentries no breathing space. The ground shook, enormous slabs of rock became detached from the passage walls. The situation was terrible. The women with us were silent. Denissov's baby kept up a continuous whimper, while his mother rocked him in her arms, crooning songs over him.

In those dreadful moments, the baby's crying and the mother's crooning were a relief from the thought of death.

At night, when the explosions stopped, a party of us made a round of all the galleries and tunnels and visited the blind alley where our cavalry was. The horses stood huddled so closely together that we could not get through and had great trouble to drag them apart. They breathed heavily and were a pitiful sight. As we left them they lifted their heads and gazed after us, as if longing to speak. Dumb animals have no way of expressing their feelings; but we were able to understand from their looks and sighs that they had a premonition of disaster. We had never parted from them so sadly as then.

Next afternoon we were in the blind alley, discussing the prospects of a sortie which we proposed to make that night from the gallery where the horses were.

It was about four in the afternoon. A dreadful uproar and rumble suddenly filled the air; the very walls seemed to move and dance about us.

We were thrown about with terrible force and fell head over heels. Denissov's baby was torn from its mother's arms, thrown aside and covered

with rubble. The mother screamed like a madwoman and the other poor women cried and groaned, clutching at their enlarged abdomens.

Then all was quiet again.

We jumped up and ran, feeling anxious for the comrades who had been standing guard near the entrances. As we reached one of the openings we saw the bodies of the sentinels; their clothes were torn to shreds and blood flowed from the mouth of one of them. A vast boulder sixteen yards thick had fallen near them. One was alive. We carried him away into the passage, as far as possible from the opening of the gallery.

On the way to the other opening, at the first turning, a voice shouted at us from out of the darkness:

"Who's there?"

We hid behind a rock and put out our lantern. One of us shouted:

"Give the password!"

The voice answered "shoot."

They were our own sentries. We lighted our lantern and walked towards them.

"Are you all safe? Nobody killed?" we questioned anxiously.

"All safe. We had time to run, but we can't go back now, there's no passage. It's a good thing we were able to get far enough away, else we should have been cut off."

"So there's no way of getting back?" we asked.

"None whatever. We're entirely cut off now. Cut off from the horses and from the oats. What shall we do, comrades?"

This news startled us, a nervous shiver ran down our spines; our faces looked dreadfully strained and distorted under their growth of beards and

coverings of dirt.

The siege went on. We were downcast. We were buried alive in that damp, evil-smelling grave. Covered with wounds, exhausted with hunger and want of sleep, bearded and dirty, we looked like walking corpses as we wandered about in silence among the fallen rocks, aching with desperate anguish to get out of it.

A bit of blue sky could just be glimpsed through the opening. At the side of it we could see young grass and a clump of field flowers bright and brave in the sun. They made our hearts heavier. We were in a dreadful state and almost cried as we yearned towards the warm daylight. Some of us, risking the explosions and firing crawled stealthily to the opening to get a sight of the day.

Meanwhile, the Whites were not idle. They came nearer and nearer, blowing up the rocks. The galleries crumbled under the force of their work; the blind alley where we had taken refuge was no longer safe. The women were a misfortune. Denissov's wife was so exhausted with starvation that she had no milk and the child refused to suck her breast; it continually cried, shrilly, giving our presence away.

We had been ten days without food, water or warmth, suffering from the damp, seized with a continual shivering.

Death faced us; some of us seemed to have lost our wits; but none wanted to give himself into the hands of the White torturers.

The women knelt on the stones, making the sign of the cross, murmuring prayers, begging god for mercy.

Once, after a big explosion, they stood in a row, making rapid signs of the cross and chanting in unison, while the loud cries of the child mingled with their voices.

The Whites were full of vindictive sadism and shouted through the opening:
"We'll get you now! We'll take you alive!"

Denissov in a fit of madness lifted his gun to shoot his wife and his crying child, but, happily, a Don Cossack, who had come over to us from the enemy, prevented him; he snatched the weapon from Denissov and threw it far away. By the evening of the tenth day the explosions stopped. The enemy retreated to the burial mounds, took up their position on a height, about seventy feet from the Openings, and opened a terrible point-blank fire on the quarries where our main forces were.

As we learned later, our comrades had made every attempt to sally out and set us free. The staff and the partisans knew we were cut off. From their secret passages they saw the Whites blowing us up. They saw the volcanic eruptions; they understood everything and knew what we were going through; but their many attempts at a sally were vain. They could not get out because the Whites had posted their men in lines, had dug trenches to protect them and placed several machine-guns over every opening of the quarry. Not a man would have emerged alive. Giving up the idea of a sally, our comrades began to cut a hole through to connect them with our galleries. On the tenth day their fire seemed to signal to us that they were trying to break through the enemy's lines.

Once assured that there was nobody over our heads we decided to make a sally that night at all costs. We were doomed to perish anyway if we remained where we were.

On this terrible day, when we were gathered in the last and deepest blind alley, the vault of the quarry suddenly fell in. Four partisans were crushed under it, two being entirely covered up, while the other two were pinned down by the edge. Silence followed the crash. Clouds of gray dust filled the gallery. The women gave heartrending shrieks which mingled with the dreadful groans from under the rock, where the Don Cossack, who had that day saved the mother and her child, now lay dying. Such was the recompense chance held for him.

"Farewell, comrades! I'm dying!" he groaned in his agony under the rock.
"Farewell, my children ! Your father has met his death in this cave!"

We dragged two of the men out from under the rock, but were not able to get the other two out.

Half an hour later and before we had time to recover, a second fall occurred which caught everybody, with the exception of four sentries who stood on duty at the entrance. All the lights went out. The cries were terrible. I was caught under a rock and lost consciousness. Denissov and Podorozhny dragged me out.

They had both suffered slightly. The two pregnant women were crushed to death and Denissov's wife had her leg broken, while the child, by some wonderful chance, remained entirely unharmed and is alive to this day.

Yusef, a handsome sailor who had been telephone operator on board ship, and Slessarenko, a member of our staff, were both badly injured, while most of our men were buried and we were not even able to drag them out.

It is difficult now to tell everything as it happened then. I remember that the hair on my head felt like wire.

Out of forty-two people only ten remained; ten shivering, ragged, desperate specters of humanity.

After the horrors we had gone through and this last horror, we could not endure our underground cemetery where our good comrades lay smashed . .

..

THE SORTIE OF TEN SPECTERS

We gathered our strength for the seemingly hopeless effort.

The night was warm with a fine drizzle. But it was so dark we could hardly see the high mounds which rose in front of the openings.

It was two o'clock in the morning as the ten of us crawled out of the quarry and wriggled our way through the wet grass, crawling on our stomachs, to reach the ditch which ran over the mouth of the main quarry.

We crawled for about fifty yards from the opening and lay down for a minute to take our bearings.

Suddenly a rocket shot up and burst. Its reddish cascade of sparks fell slowly downwards, throwing fantastic rays on the tops of the mounds, and on groups of White soldiers posted there with machine-guns. A second rocket followed with a hiss, then a third and machine-guns began to rattle from all directions, followed by rifle fire.

The Whites had discovered us. Ignorant of our numbers, they held us ten gaunt, desperate specters of men under continual fire.

We huddled together in a cavity in the ground, keeping as low as possible, while the shots whizzed above us. We were soon as hot as in a turkish bath. One of the comrades lost his head and began to shout curses. So we all rushed headlong into the darkness, jumped into the ditch and ran in a file, crouching and firing as we went, towards our friends. The Whites had two machine-guns posted at the very mouth of the quarry, on top of the wall of rock. There was no way to avoid them. It seemed that we were running into certain death.

The ditch and the darkness of the night prevented the Whites from taking proper aim. That saved us. When their gunners saw us coming for them

they lost their heads. The amount of firing and shouting confused them. Fearing we were in great numbers, they abandoned their guns and ran away.

The way to the quarry was free.

We rushed directly into the openings, running up against the sentries of our main detachment who, taking us for whiteguards, opened fire and wounded one of us.

There was a smell of burnt bread in the galleries, which were filled with the acrid smoke of wood fires by which the men were baking wheat cakes and grain. Oil lamps and lanterns were burning in rows.

The alarm horn, at the signal from the sentries, was being blown.

PANIC AMONG THE WHITES

Dawn broke.

The whiteguards' abandonment of their machine-guns over the entrances gave our main detachment the chance to get out and turn the guns upon the enemy, who fell into a panic. Evidently, he supposed that we had come out of some secret holes and were at his rear. His trumpets sounded the alarm in the village and the village bell jangled in accompaniment.

We advanced against his chief positions, shouting "Hurrah!" at the top of our lungs and maintaining a steady fire to keep him panicky and uncontrolled.

He abandoned all his positions.

As day broke, we could see White soldiers and baggage wagons scattering in all directions. We occupied the whole surrounding territory in the course of a few hours and cleared the village. The inhabitants came out of their hiding places and congratulated us on our victory, slapping our backs in jubilant approval.

The orderlies were immediately instructed to get the dead and wounded out from under the rocks and carry them to where our main forces were.

After that we examined the fortified positions of the Whites, where everything was arranged with the idea of holding us in siege. They had planned to take us by hunger. There were even rows of trenches with connecting galleries to the very openings of the quarry. In the trenches we found a quantity of food which they had abandoned in their hasty retreat: baskets of eggs, butter, cream, milk, and so on. There was also a quantity of rifles, cartridges, bombs and articles looted from the villages, especially from Stary-Karantin. The trenches and passages were heaped with feather beds, pillows, bedsteads, churns, mirrors, jackets, trousers, petticoats, shirts and other garments.

BACK UNDERGROUND

But our triumph was short lived.

In the morning we observed that the English and French warships were standing at the entrance to Kerch port, while a barge equipped with artillery and the torpedo boat Zhivoy came out of the bay into the strait, moving in the direction of the Black Sea and stopping opposite Stary-Karantin.

Meanwhile, we lay in the trenches at the top of the mound and along the highroad, watching the enemy's infantry and cavalry, which were advancing from all directions again and closing us in a ring.

A gun was fired from the fortress. Then shell began to explode and shrapnel to whizz through the air. Every explosion was accompanied by a cloud of yellowish smoke and a shower of shot.

The Whites were firing from all sides, from the fortress, the bay and the strait.

Infantry and cavalry began to advance on the quarry but fell under our machine-gun fire. Then the ships and fortress trained their guns on top of the mound where we had our main trenches.

Shells began to fall near us; we were afraid to put out our heads; yet, many of us could not restrain a laugh when a shell fell into the middle of a feather bed, which the Whites had left on a neighboring mound, and smothered us all in a cloud of flying feathers. But shells then fell into our trenches and we lost all desire to laugh as fragments of bodies were blown into the air and we were spattered with blood and covered with sand. The enemy's infantry surrounded us under cover of the heavy fire from the English and French ships. To the shouts of the whiteguards, to the noise of blows from rifle butts, inhuman yells, screams of the wounded, we were beaten back into our caves, with fifteen men killed and twelve wounded whom we picked up as we retreated.

So we were back again in the dead silence, the black darkness, the cold, damp and mildew. We had not even time to bury our dead whom we had dragged from under the rocks and lifted from the battle field. We put them all in a separate gallery, where they lay on a bed of stone, awaiting burial.

FATHERS AND SONS

Early next morning a partisan rushed into the gallery, shouting:

"Get ready, boys! The Whites have brought a whole crowd of people."

"What sort of people?"

"Villagers."

We jumped up and ran to the openings. The whole surface of the quarry was crowded with people. They were a motley assembly of peasants, gardeners, old barge-haulers from the nearest fisheries, old and young women, even boys and young girls. They stood leaning on spades, shovels and pickaxes, gazing silently at the openings in the rock.

They did not see us, but many of us caught sight of wife, father or mother in the crowd.

A ring of armed whiteguards surrounded the crowd. Officers ran to and fro, brandishing whips. We were aghast, not being able to understand what it all meant. A moment later, when we had already recognized our relations, the officers began to shout savagely at the people, who started working.

Stones were carted to the spot and the villagers began filling in the openings.

We heard them crying, complaining, swearing. One of the old men threw his spade away with a firm gesture and shouted:

"I can't bury my Peter in this way, for I know he's alive."

A number of the others showed an inclination to follow his example. We heard the sound of blows, struck with rifle butts and whips.

We were helpless and could but look on through the openings and grind our teeth in fury. We were being buried alive, but we uttered no word and fired no shot, lest we endanger the workers and peasants.

So the whole day passed. At night the Whites retired some distance from the quarry. Then we gathered our whole strength and cleared the openings of all that had been thrown in during the day. Next morning we enjoyed their savage comment on our night's work. But they tried again. They drove the villagers back to the spot and the latter were kept busy another long day, walling us up. Next night -we again cleared the openings.

The Whites were furious. They invented a new and devilish trick. Two officers brought an old fisherman to one of the openings.

"Call out your son, you old rascal."

"Peter, Peter! Come out!" the old man cried in a trembling, senile voice. "Come out, my boy! I'm suffering because of you. If you come out I'll be forgiven. Save me, son!"

Peter, who was standing among us, started and made attempts to get out; but we held him by the arms.

Without waiting for an answer, one of the officers cut off the old man's head with his sword and threw the body down into the passage, shouting savagely:

"Tremble . . . for that is what will happen to all of you!"

The Whites tried this trick over and over again, but the partisans refused to answer the calls.

There was no limit to the Whites' cruelty. They began to throw satchels of dynamite into the quarry. The explosions had a terrible effect, shattering the quarry and punishing us with awful concussions.

But, in spite of these hard conditions of the struggle we kept the Whites in a high state of tension.

We frequently sallied from the quarry, making a great noise and creating a panic among them, so that they started fighting among themselves, while we rushed back into the passage and looked on. That made them furious. They feared our sallies and they feared dark nights, for we always sallied out at night, appearing suddenly among them like mysterious scarecrows.

One of the prisoners we took told of the panic which reigned among the Whites at night.

"Imagine standing on duty at night, peering nervously into the darkness, imagining terrible figures looming suddenly over you, hearing the sound of shots and loud shouts of 'Hurrah!' Of course, you know there's really nobody, yet you stand there trembling."

So much did they fear our sallies. They could not see our positions underground. Once an officer, having cut off an old woman's head as the Whites usually did, threw the body into our opening. We made no sound. He then looked into our hole holding a bomb before him. One of the partisans raised his rifle and before firing, calmly said:

"Look on, boys, and see the dog fall."

The shot followed. The officer flopped like a dead partridge and his bomb went off, making the passages thunder with the echo.

THE VALE OF SORROWS

Some days had passed since the Anglo-French artillery had driven us back into our caves.

While trying to block us in the Whites persisted in their blowing up of our gloomy stronghold.

From the openings in our caves we could see the tops of the burial mounds, which rose on the gray background of sky and were crowded with whiteguards and machine-guns trained upon us.

One morning early the explosions grew louder and more frequent. The Whites had found weak spots in our galleries, where the rock gave way easily to the action of the dynamite. Everything round us shook continually. We were told later that in town, two miles from the quarries, the windows of houses and shops were shattered by the concussions.

The force of the explosions broke off huge boulders which crushed the sentries on duty at the openings. The staff began to fear a repetition of what had happened a few days ago, when the thirty-two men were crushed.

On the stonecutters' advice, they decided to abandon the upper galleries for the so-called white rock strata, where the galleries were one story lower. The thickness of the roof in these lower galleries was, in places, as much as seventy yards, and proof against dynamite.

A few days later the stone-cutters had made a channel into the lower galleries of white rock; we evacuated our quarters. Going down into that well was entering upon a new phase of underground life.

One of the biggest explosions occurred in the middle of our evacuation. Everything was overthrown — pots, spoons, beds were scattered about and mixed with human bodies. The groans of animals sounded on every side; men jumped to their feet and hurriedly put out the fire which started in the

straw from the overthrown lamps. Women fell on their knees and, folding their hands on their breasts, muttered prayers. They snatched up the little children and rushed to the partisans and members of the staff weeping loudly and screaming, "Help, help!" The children cried and snatched at the partisans, afraid of being left behind.

The exhausted people had no strength to bear the nightmare. Partisans and members of the staff did their best to get the civilians down to the lower floor through the one opening. Orderlies carried the wounded, the women took the children and everybody ran, trying to make no noise.

The old men and women groaned and looked terrified to death; they could not bear to part with their cattle, carts and other household goods.

"What shall we do now? We collected all this by the sweat of our brow. Now we're going to lose it all. Look at this cart of mine, how strong it is; it might have lasted me all my life!"

"Get out, you and your cart! What about my horse? He's of Siberian breed and never gets tired. He will trot and trot and never needs a whip. He hates the sight of a whip and now, maybe, the Whites will get him. It's God's punishment on us for our sins."

The old man went up to his horse and kissed its flabby lips.

The explosions made fissures in various parts of the galleries, the air rushed through with a piercing draught that made us anxious, not without cause, for a new terror threatened us.

"Gas!"

"We must set fire to the straw!"

We snatched at the straw and burnt it in the passages.

There was a ghastly panic. People fell down. Some of them frantically wetted rags with their saliva or urine and tied them over their mouths and

heads. They cried and yelled, out of their wits. Some ran into the depths of the galleries.

"Gas! Gas!"

When the panic abated and everybody felt the danger was past, the women and children who had been poisoned by the gas were brought in. The children had open mouths, dry and blackened, and their eyes stared blankly. Their mothers lay with loose hair, white faces and blue lips.

The women took off their crosses and put them around the necks of the dead.

Meanwhile explosions continually thundered above; all the openings were hastily being walled in.

Exhausted by a nightmare siege of over six weeks, want of air, water and food in the damp cold and darkness, the absence of medical help and great number of wounded, we were now faced with the question of what we were to do next.

Clearly, we could not bear this any longer and continue military activities. We had to find some way out or everybody would perish.

It was decided to break through to the Ajimushkai quarries — the headquarters of the revolutionary military staff — and there debate the question of further struggle.

BACK IN AJIMUSHKAI

The news that we were to make a sally spread into every corner of the galleries, blind alleys and caves.

"They are leaving! They are leaving!"

We heard the groans of the sick and wounded. They raised their bandaged heads, showing dirty emaciated faces, unshaven for many months, unrecognizable under their coating of soot in which eyes and teeth gleamed phantom-like. The sound of their groans, cries and ravings filled the underground hospital. We approached them with horrified pity.

They begged us with their eyes: "Finish us, shoot us!"

We tried to calm them. We did not know ourselves what would become of us in an hour's time. We might all be slain by the enemy's fire.

We decided to leave a garrison of thirty men under the command of Joseph Yushko, a daring fighter and bitter enemy of the bourgeoisie, to guard the wounded and other inhabitants of Stary-Karantin quarries. Yushko was a good machine-gunner; once during battle, an old wound of his started bleeding from the perpetual vibration of the gun, but he would not relinquish it. It was to him that we entrusted the garrison of Stary-Karantin quarry.

We drew up in single file and walked slowly, carrying lamps, making no noise, holding our breath. We were ordered not to cough. At the end of the gallery we put out our lights.

We emerged without being discovered.

The night was cloudy; the new sickle of the moon played hide and seek in banks of cloud.

Searchlights flashed from the French and English warships in the bay.

Eventually we reached Katerlez village near which we drew out in a line and lay down on the ground, while a few scouts went to the village to find out if any whiteguards were there.

The peasants informed them that a punitive detachment, made up of Kornilov's and Markov's men, mostly officers, was quartered in Bulganak village, two miles away.

The same peasants gave us the joyful news that our Ajimushkai partisans had made a raid on Bryansk station and, rumor said, had taken two guns, many prisoners and machine-guns.

That rumor especially raised our spirits and gave us strength to attack the punitive detachment, notwithstanding our exhaustion.

At dawn we went quietly to the hillside over which the sleeping village of Bulganak lay scattered in the gray twilight.

Moving in single file, in two directions, we encircled the village, going close to the little cottages and lying down in the vegetable gardens and orchards. Everything was quiet. Only cocks crowed and a dog barked now and then.

Our machine-gun started to rattle. This was the signal for us to attack and we suddenly rose in the darkness.

The sonorous voice of our chief broke through the tense silence:

"Forward!"

The partisans roared "Hurrah!" and charged.

Officers rushed out of the cottages in their underclothes jumping down from roofs, windows and fences. In their fright they rushed straight upon our bayonets.

They had no time even to get their rifles. They cried, called us "comrades," begged for mercy. But we were in no mood for mercy.

We had to be quick with our work. A terrific uproar, with nothing human in it, filled the village. The Whites ran round like penned animals seeking outlet. They were in a tight ring. The yells and curses, the crashes and firing, the maddened horses galloping[^] through the village with torn bridles hanging loose, all created still greater panic in those last moments of the night.

We were well aware that we had created a deadlock; that if the enemy rallied we would all be killed. There was nothing for us but to fight desperately and savagely, to destroy the whiteguards to a man, without letting up.

Many of the whiteguards jumped out of the windows without firing, hoping to escape in the dark, but our bayonets and our bombs, which shattered the roofs of cottages and sheds, made a merciless end of them.

By morning we had finished them. The 'streets were littered with their corpses. With the first rays of the sun, as the signal sounded to retreat, a few shells whizzed over our heads and exploded beyond the village. It was an armored train firing at us.

We retreated quickly behind the range of hills which stretched up to the Ajimushkai quarries with the guns of the train pursuing us all the way.

Arriving in Ajimushkai, we found a large group of partisans from Karantin quarries already there. They were a fearsome sight, black with soot, emaciated, covered with lice, ragged; they looked more like apes than human beings. We were so tired we could hardly stand. But, we were glad we had got there. Some of the most hardened of us wept for the relief of having got away from the hell of Stary-Karantin. But we could not escape the cries and groans echoing in our ears, the agonized faces of the comrades we had been forced to abandon, which burned in our eyes. The nightmare we had gone through left ineffaceable traces of our suffering.

That is why rivers of blood, corpses, wounds, hunger, thirst, the horrors of underground life, the groans, the ravings of mad-men, even the expectation of future horrible suffering — why nothing could divert us from the struggle started by the Party and the working class; that is why we could not forget our vow to save the comrades who remained in Stary-Karantin.

STORMING THE BRYANSK WORKS

In Ajimushkai Comrades Khovrin and Bragin gave us details about the taking of the Bryansk works.

Ensign Marchenko was in command of the garrison which guarded the Bryansk works. He approached the revolutionary military staff a number of times, through various persons, with a proposal to hand the works over to the partisans. But, the staff had little faith in his words and suspected a trap. Still they did not break contact with him and tentatively continued negotiations.

In the end Marchenko demanded urgently that a meeting be arranged between him and representatives of the detachment. The staff agreed to appoint Comrade Bragin. The meeting was to take place in Kapkany village, in the house of a fisherman.

Bragin, accompanied by another comrade, left the same day for Kapkany village.

"Well, where are your officers?" he asked the fisherman who came out to meet him.

Then two officers in full uniform appeared on the threshold. One of them was Ensign Marchenko, the other a very young officer.

Marchenko himself was a youngish man of middle height with brown hair. His steel-gray eyes expressed great strength of will. He was trimly, even smartly dressed.

Keeping their hands in the pockets of their coats, a hand grenade in one and a gun in the other, Bragin and his comrade walked towards the officers, sizing them up.

The officers held themselves very straight; they were slightly pale and seemed nervous. Their eyes ran from Bragin to his companion.

The elder officer said:

"I am Ensign Marchenko, in command of the garrison of Bryansk works, and this is a comrade in arms; we call him 'Vova'."

Then they went into the cottage, the partisans keeping their hands in their pockets.

"Comrades," said Marchenko, "we are not officers, but confederates. From this day on we are no more soldiers of the rotten and finished bourgeois society, but soldiers of the revolution. We will serve it honestly. I will hand over the garrison of Bryansk works to you. I will tell you our password, show you the position of our quarters and sentries and will help you to take possession of the works and camp. But you must act today, as we expect to be relieved. If we do not do it today, the chance will be lost."

After hearing Marchenko, Bragin stood up and shook him by the hand as if to seal their union.

"Very good, comrade. We will rely on your help and start preparations immediately. To be sure of success, let me take Comrade Vova with me."

They agreed.

Marchenko gave Bragin the most minute details for the raid's success.

Then both partisans returned to Ajimushkai quarries with Ensign Vova.

The staff worked out a plan of operations.

Bragin changed into an officer's uniform, which Marchenko had provided; some of the partisans also dressed in the uniforms of White soldiers or officers. The whole detachment was to participate in the action and was divided into two sections; the one under Bragin was to settle with the main guard and march to the sea to capture the Whites' ammunition and sink their

ships ; the other, commanded by Khovrin and Samoilenko, was to seize the working camp where some White detachments were quartered.

When the partisans came to the works at dawn and divided into two parties, Bragin walked up to the first sentinel.

"Come here!" he shouted in a tone of command.

The man hurried towards him and stood at attention.

The partisans rushed at him, grabbed his gun, thrusting the muzzle into his face, and bound him.

After that Bragin ran into the guard room.

"Asleep again, you sons of bitches!" he yelled at the guard.

They were frightened at the sight of Bragin's officer's uniform and jumped to their feet.

Bragin then opened the door of the guard-room and shouted:

"Come in!"

Partisans dressed as whiteguards came in, seized the guards, bound them and locked them up in a separate room.

Having dealt with the guard, Bragin walked to the plant yard where he ordered the White soldiers he met to get the artillery, carts, camp kitchens and everything ready and to be quick about it, as they expected the partisans to attack. The White soldiers promptly obeyed, having no inkling of the truth.

Bragin then took his detachment to the shore where some ships, laden with automobile parts, technical equipment and war munitions, lay at anchor.

The partisans quickly bound the sentries, shooting some of them, and invaded the ships. The crews went over to the partisans.

Everything that was of value or necessary to the detachment was taken off the ships and loaded on the carts for conveyance to the quarries. After that the ships were sunk.

Meanwhile, the other detachment under Samoilenko and Khovrin penetrated to the working camp and opened fire on the guards.

The Whites began to run out of their barracks. Some ran in a panic round the yard, falling under the onslaught of the partisans. Others, hastily arming themselves, ran to the wharf, hoping to get aboard the ships and put out to sea. But they encountered Bragin's detachment which, having sunk the ships, gave them a welcome with fire and sword, exterminating them. In the twilight before dawn broke, the works' yard was a scene of utter whiteguard confusion.

The White soldiers carried out the orders given by the partisans dressed as officers, harnessing horses to the carts and loading the latter with ammunition.

The White officers had lost their heads and could not understand what was happening. Hearing the firing they ran headlong, seeking refuge even in the pipes which lay in the plant yard. They also fought among themselves, unable to recognize who were enemies and who were friends which, actually, was difficult for them.

They began eventually to organize a defense — but only when the partisans were already retreating. Then they understood what had happened and, while the partisans were on the road to Ajimushkai, a White regiment attacked them, cut off part of the baggage train, took back some of the prisoners, the Artillery and ammunition. The rest of the prisoners, two hundred and twelve men in all, were taken to the quarries together with rifles, equipment and two camp kitchens.

"So you've got no guns?" we asked disappointingly, having in mind the rumor learned from the peasants of Katerlez village. "Yes, we have," answered the comrades laughing. And they led us to see the two camp kitchens in which their dinner was cooking. These kitchens had started the rumor that the Ajimushkai partisans had taken some field guns.

Nevertheless, they were also the cause of our wiping out the Kornilow and Markov punitive detachment in Bulganak village.

"What about Comrade Marchenko?" we asked. Bragin shook his head sadly.

"He's in hospital. He was wounded in the leg during the fight."

Marchenko's wound unhappily got worse. Blood poisoning set in and he died in the quarry. We buried him on the hill. After the Soviet Government had been established in Kerch, Comrade Marchenko's remains, together with those of other partisans, were given a Red burial in a common grave.

DEATH OF COMRADE SAMOILENKO

We were not left long to rejoice over our safe arrival and liberation from the hell of Stary-Karantin.

We had food and rested our exhausted bodies. But we were unable to change our clothes because there were none. We still suffered miserably from lice, scratching our bodies until they bled.

On the day of our arrival in Ajimushkai, the whiteguards sent all their forces to that spot, taking them off the Karantin quarries, where they left only an insignificant detachment to continue the siege. So we had barely gone to sleep when the cry sounded throughout the detachment:

"The Cadets are advancing!"

The news spread like wildfire and we jumped to our feet.

"The cursed swine! They don't give us a minute's rest!"

The Whites encircled the 'village and neighborhood of the Ajimushkai quarries.

Our scouts reported their movement to the chief of the revolutionary military staff, Comrade Samoilenko, but the latter gave orders not to fire. His motive for such instructions is unknown to this day.

Not meeting with any resistance, the Whites closely invested the whole territory of the quarries, almost to the very openings, training at least fifty machine-guns upon us.

Some of our militant workers had urged Samoilenko to give battle as soon as the Whites began to advance, but Samoilenko was stubborn. Ordinarily, he was a reserved, but rough-spoken man, and not a good mixer. He preferred to act on his own responsibility, believing himself to be an expert

in military affairs. This led to a misunderstanding between him and the assistant military commissar, Khrony, which ended fatally for Comrade Samoilenko.

A few hours after the Whites had begun to advance, our scouts saw that we could not only take one of their positions and its two machine-guns but could also get a detachment through at that spot and attack them from their rear.

Comrade Khrony informed Samoilenko of this. The latter answered roughly:

"What sort of expert do you think you are? Don't poke your nose where you're not wanted. And don't interfere with the duties of the chairman of the general staff. I know what I have to do."

Khrony, irritated by these words, went to the opening and told the comrades there about Samoilenko's action.

Dmitry Denissov, second brother of the commander of the Stary-Karantin detachment, happened to be there. He was a bad man, with a criminal past, who had committed murder a number of times. Dmitry Denissov walked quickly to the gallery where Comrade Samoilenko was and, meeting him on the way, said roughly:

"Why don't you allow us to take the machine-guns?"

Instead of answering, Samoilenko rushed at Denissov, swearing and brandishing his gun.

"Get out, immediately!"

Denissov shot point blank at Samoilenko and killed him, after which he disappeared. At the sound of the shot, all the partisans ran in. Everybody was incensed at the action of the bandit Denissov.

Over the still warm body of Samoilenko, Comrade Garbulsky said to the partisans:

"Comrades! We have sustained a great loss in the person of the late chairman of the revolutionary staff, Comrade Samoilenko. We must elect a new chairman."

There was a moment's silence. Then a forest of dirty hands lifted and a unanimous shout rolled through the galleries:

"Bragin! We want Bragin!"

"We know him. He was with us in every battle!" numerous voices shouted.

Touched by their recognition, Bragin stood up:

"Comrades!" he said. "I promise not to let the rifle out of my hands and to hold the banner of struggle firmly for the workers' cause. Meanwhile, time doesn't wait, the enemy is close — we'll make a sally"

"Hurrah! A sally!" shouted the partisans.

The commander gave orders to march out at three points, to strike the enemy suddenly in the rear and, under cover of that, to seize his machine-guns and other equipment.

NEW BATTLES

We set off, crawling out of the openings quietly in single file and continuing over the grass.

Machine-guns began to rattle.

The partisans charged with a roar. The enemy opened fire with every kind of gun and rifle. Machine-guns rattled, bombs exploded, striking terror into men's hearts by the rain of fragments and missiles.

Our advancing force included a battalion of Stavropol men, over two hundred in number. They had all run over to us from the Whites and fought furiously, as only men can for whom there is nothing save victory or death.

"Forward at the double!"

We jumped up at the command, ran forward with savage yells, lay down, then suddenly forward again, then down, waiting.

From time to time comrades fell headlong, struck by shot. The Whites advanced further into the village, dragging their machine-guns which they planted in the churchyard and on the cottage roofs. They kept up a heavy fire, while the French and English furiously shelled the village and territory of the quarries from their torpedo-boats and cruiser lying in the strait, close to the fortress.

The whole surrounding country was veiled in the smoke of bombardment and battle, of burning peasant cottages.

IN THE NOBLEST CAUSE

The battle raged all day. The Whites had fortified themselves in the churchyard and it was difficult to drive them from their positions.

By noon, heavily reinforced, they began to move from the churchyard. A battalion of them marched quickly on the right side of the village. They were only a hundred yards from our positions. We were ready for them.

We lay behind a wall and let them come near, giving no sign of our presence; then we suddenly mowed them down with our machine-guns, shattering them. Their line broke and they ran in disorder towards the village. Incidentally, the people on board the French and English ships, seeing groups of men retreating on the outskirts of the village, took them for partisans and raked them with every caliber of gun, so that, in half an hour, the Whites were destroyed. The ships' guns shattered the miserable peasant cottages, knocking them down, breaking in the roofs and walls, revealing the squalid interiors, leaving nothing but the broken stones, black, solitary, smoking. The village took on a strange and terrible aspect.

Towards evening, as twilight stole over the narrow alleys and yards and into the quarry openings, the battle ended.

We picked up our wounded and retreated into the quarry. Eighty men dropped, out of our ranks that day — over fifty wounded and twenty-seven killed. That was a great loss to us. Moreover, the newly elected chairman of the revolutionary staff, Comrade Bragin, was badly wounded.

Comrade Bragin was steadfast in battle and quick to make decisions. He was so enthusiastic in a fight that he forgot his basic Party work which was to direct the staff. Personal participation in battle was his main concern; he was always in the very front.

Comrade Kutepov, who still suffered from an unhealed leg wound and walked on crutches, was appointed in his place.

While we had time, before the enemy began another advance, the staff decided to bury our dead, whose bodies lay in the underground galleries of the quarry, in a common grave. An enormous pit was dug outside, not far from the entrance to the quarry. The bodies of our comrades were brought out and laid in a row beside the pit. All the partisans, and the inhabitants who were hiding in the quarry, gathered round the grave.

Comrade Garbulsky climbed on a rock. For a moment he stood at attention; then he took off his big cap. The partisans silently followed his example, snatching their caps off their dirty and unkempt heads.

Garbulsky stood silent for a moment.

"Comrades!" he began.

A shiver ran down our backs. Death-like silence. The stench of putrefaction, the surrounding destruction, the sadness of the moment were very heavy on our hearts.

"Our comrades are dead. We are able today to bury them on the surface with due honors. We must honor them, for they have fallen in the noblest cause. . . the cause of the revolution!"

Comrade Khovrin's wonderful voice rose sweetly in a revolutionary song of honor to the heroes fallen in the struggle.

Other voices took up the song; coarse voices made permanently hoarse by exposure, discordant, tuneless, yet powerfully pathetic and stirring.

Men and women sobbed; the women made the sign of the cross and muttered prayers.

"They have perished," Garbulsky continued, "but the revolution and the Soviet Government stand and will live to spread over all the world. The time has come when everywhere the workers and peasants will revolt against the landlords and capitalists for the Soviets. Here, we are surrounded by White bandits, forced down into cold, dark caves. But the glorious Red Army is fifty miles from Kerch peninsula. We are in a ring, a

tight ring of French and British warships, which hold us under continual fire. They are paid mercenaries come to suppress the workers' and peasants' revolt. Up there (he pointed to the north) they have the workers' and peasants' government. It is hastening to our aid. It is only fifty miles from us. We do not weep. We shall surely avenge our dead comrades. We shall go on with the great struggle in which they fell."

The chorus again rose in the hymn to the dead heroes.

Garbulsky waited until they finished. Then he said solemnly:

"We will bury our comrades . . . and over their bodies we swear to continue the struggle for the people's liberation."

We laid our comrades reverently in the large common grave. The women wept, covering their mouths, blowing their noses on their sleeves or the hems of their skirts. The men rubbed their eyes. Everybody crowded to the front to pick up a handful of earth and throw it into the grave.

Three volleys were fired. The spades rapidly shoveled the earth and a mound of fresh soil arose. Over it we laid green wreath and a piece of red material. The sun shone on it and the light spring breeze played round it. Grass would grow there . . . and the wild flowers . . .

That day we also built large cemented water tanks in the quarry, against the possibility of the wells, being poisoned and in case of a long siege. We also baked bread and laid in stocks of food.

"WATER! .. WATER!"

Early one hot morning — the sun was unusually hot for that season of the year — White patrols and scouts began to appear. By noon their infantry were marching in a long gray ribbon on the highroad, while their cavalry rode towards us from the opposite side. Scouts ran continually between the two. In those few days of quietness, the enemy had been reorganizing his forces for his most violent, determined attempt to destroy us.

The White forces came as close as they dared and opened with rifle fire and machine-guns.

The French and English ships began to find their range.

"Boom. . . boom. . . boom!"

Single shots first, then more and more frequent, boom . . . boom . . . boom . . . shells whizzed and whined through the air, exploding with terrific crashes, spraying our positions with shot and fragments. Under cover of their artillery, the White lines crawled ant-like into orchards and ditches, stooping, running, hiding, seeking refuge from our deadly fusillades.

The last cottages of Ajimushkai village, which had suffered badly from the previous cannonade, were swept away by the French and British ships.

During the few days between this and the last battle, the richer peasants who had been hiding in the quarry had left for the neighboring villages. The poor peasants, unable to do so, remained underground.

The cannonade rose in fury; the Whites advanced in a thin line, flanking us on every side. They came on in short rushes, silently, closing us in an ever tighter ring.

The partisans broke through the Whites' right flank and attempted to get to their rear. The Whites retreated in disorder. But they moved a squadron of

cavalry against us and beat us back.

Eventually, we were forced out of our positions and retreated underground. Presently we heard bombs exploding in the passages and whiteguards shouting. They rained bombs and hand grenades into the openings so incessantly that we could not even look out.

Then came the first dynamite explosion.

We jumped to our feet and gazed stupidly at each other. A massive boulder fell, raising a strong draught which swept stone dust into our faces. Some partisans lay crushed and groaning under the rocks, others breathed heavily, thrown off their feet by the sudden pressure of air.

The explosion made a hole in the roof of one of the passages and the light shone through the funnel-shaped opening.

There was a silence of dread. We glanced at the ceiling, fearing new falls of rock. The silence was like that which precedes a thunderstorm. We started in the direction of the staff quarters and on the way met Comrade Garbulsky, who was running towards us with a group of comrades.

"Comrades!" said Garbulsky. "The water tank is blown to pieces."

That was a staggering blow. We ran to the tanks and found that the roof had fallen in over one of them, covering it up. The hand of the sailor Omelchuk, who had been crushed in the fall, stuck out from the debris. Water was being hastily scooped out of the remaining tank by means of buckets; it also was cracked and the water was pouring away.

"What are we to do now?" queried a thin, hairy, worn-looking partisan.

"We're left without water. That's the end of us all. What can we do? We're six hundred men in the detachment left without water. And what about the villagers, the children? We must think of them too."

"Whether we think of them or not, it'll make no difference. We'll all be sucking stones soon."

The gloomy news that the tanks were blown up spread throughout the quarry.

"What will become of us now? We're lost!"

The want of water made itself felt immediately. We left off making soup. Our drinking water was rationed. Everybody suffered from thirst. The bread and other food, also, was soon eaten. We baked wheat and barley grains on which all the partisans and the villagers who were in the quarry fed.

MASS EXPLOSIONS

A few days later our hand-mill, which served for clipping the grain into grits to make porridge, broke.

The situation was also complicated by the treason of some sentries. While standing guard for us these ex-Whites, whom we had taken prisoners, escaped, carrying with them a Colt machine-gun. They gave the White staff information about the position we were in, about the broken water tanks and the parts of the quarry in which we were quartered.

After their escape the explosions were more frequent and occurred in several places simultaneously; over our hospital, over the staff quarters and over the hand-mill which stood inside the galleries. The Whites were preparing a prodigious explosion which, according to their calculations, was to blow up the whole quarry.

At night the enemy drew off from the openings; but he continued to surround the quarry, stretching barbed wire across the places he thought most dangerous.

There was the sound of pickaxes and spades wherever we went. They seemed to be digging over the whole surface of the quarry. What did it mean — a mass explosion?

When silence set in at last above us, we knew something fearful was going to happen. We listened in dread. Then came the stamp of running feet above — the White soldiers were running away, having lit the fuses.

Seconds of awful waiting!

Suddenly the earth shook and groaned and heaved. A whirlwind burst through the galleries, overthrowing the men, covering them with a storm of stones, destroying the passages. Most of the men remained alive, but it seemed to us that we were separated, torn off from the whole world. The

explosions were so loud that our ears hurt. We were bent double as if some unknown force had struck us on the nape of the neck. Our heads ached, our hearts beat painfully.

We moved from one blind alky to another, not knowing where we could find refuge. Our eyes watered as we strained them in the impenetrable blackness.

Havoc and pain around us. Partisans caught under the fallen rocks writhed and yelled; others beside them lay crushed and silent. Our hair stood up. There was an end to daylight, everything had collapsed, earth, heaven. Nothing was left but blank darkness and chaos.

Despite these heavy sufferings our detachment showed a firm resistance to the enemy. During the day time, the Whites hurled bombs in upon us and engineered their terrible explosions. At night they drew away to a safe distance behind barbed wire.

Days passed. Our sufferings had become unbearable. The men were shrunk to skin and bone. Their clothes seemed about to fall off their skeleton bodies. The lice had become intolerable; they crawled over our clothes, over our faces, in our hair and beards. Our heads were so full of vermin that they looked gray. Our whole attention centered on lice. We scratched our bodies until we were covered with blood. Probably none of us was quite sane at the time. Even the cattle kept shivering and remained lying down most the time to avoid the shock of the explosions. The beasts sighed (heavily, staring pathetically; and the horses looked so strange and mournful that it seemed they must understand everything!)

Our lips were swollen from sucking moisture off the rocks. We stood in line and waited while one of us climbed up some rocks which we had heaped for the purpose and licked the moisture off the surface of the wall, to allay his dreadful thirst. As he yielded his place to the next in line, his face was gray from being pressed against the limestone and his swollen lips stood out sharply. To complete the terrible scene, the groans of the wounded and the ravings of the delirious and insane came as a chorus from the blind alley which served as a hospital; terrible phantoms looked out at us from that damp vault, where the air was heavy with the stench of purulent wounds.

This time the Whites organized a thorough siege and surrounded the Ajimushkai, Stary-Karantin and Bagirovsk quarries with a tangle of barbed wire. Their guns covered every opening and hole. They posted sentries at the very doors of our underground hell.

We were entirely cut off from the world, buried in our frightful surroundings, living with terror. The fire of life still flickered in our grave, but it was only a flicker, wan, ghostly. Groans and curses never stopped. Yells and ravings of the mad and wounded increased. But the clamor of our nightmare down there was shut in by the thick strata of rock and soil. Nobody heard the terrible chorus of pain and torture which echoed back from the gallery vaults.

Meanwhile a drunken revelry went on outside.

The whiteguards looted the district, broke open trunks and chests, took away samovars, sewing machines, crockery, everything that came to hand. Anybody who raised objections against their plunder was convicted of bolshevism and shot without more ado.

The whole district groaned under their tyranny. Men were hanged, whipped, shot; women were violated. That was their way of showing their power.

The secret service quarters and the fortress were filled with people suspected of sympathizing with or aiding revolutionary organizations or partisans.

As the quarries encircled Kerch, the town suffered damage from the concussions of the explosions. It was wreathed in black smoke.

The thunder of explosions was heard night and day, like an interminable, titanic thunderstorm.

The quarries rumbled in smoke and fire; the Whites walled in and blew up hundreds of people.

The secret Bolshevik organization took various steps, working strenuously, seeking ways to save over a thousand people in the quarries, doomed to a

dreadful death. But they were unable to devise the necessary succor.

The terrified inhabitants were also on our side and sympathized with our sufferings, but they were crushed under the iron heel of whiteguard rule.

The chairman of the secret organization, Comrade Statsevich, called together the secret militants: Comrades M. Perepelitsa, D. Perepelitsa, A. Mandich, Kreps and Tsvelik. They met in the little room of the shoemaker, Tsvelik, where they discussed plans and measures. But they had no forces at their disposal which could open the iron jaw and set the detachments free. The one hope left was the coming of the Red Army, then on the isthmus of Akmonai — only fifty miles from the quarries and the town of Kerch. The close presence of the Red Army put heroism and endurance into the hearts of the partisans.

The whole urban and rural population, oppressed as it was by the Whites, lived in hope of the coming of the Red Army. But the Red Army suddenly left the peninsula, retreating north. And the black banner with skull and crossbones fluttered again over the bleeding Crimea.

RED PARTISANS DO AND DIE

We fed our hopes on desperate possibilities. Could we gather our last strength, strike the enemy suddenly, drive him from his positions, occupy the town and join the Red Army? At the bottom of our hearts we had no hope. Death was everywhere. In addition to our heaped misfortunes, a mysterious illness had stricken us. Every day it claimed new victims. The galleries, passages and blind alleys were full of sick men, lying about groaning and unconscious. The orderlies had no rest, carrying sufferers to our hospital. Many died from the strange malady.

Then the staff, realizing that despair was a powerful factor, resolved upon a final throw — to break into Kerch, hoping that it would create a panic on the White front at Akmonai and thus make it possible for the Red Army to clear the isthmus and drive the enemy into the Black Sea.

A plan of operations was worked out. The sailor, Dmitry Kossenko, who had been at the head of our scouts, was appointed to direct them. Those of the wounded who were well enough to move got up and joined us. The rest remained in the quarry in despair, awaiting their end.

Everything was ready for the sally. We said farewell to our comrades, took our lamps and moved to the issue.

We marched in a long file, carrying our lamps, trying not to trip on each other's feet, very quietly, although we were excited to the utmost. That excitement kept us from falling down and sinking into the sleep of exhaustion. We went, well aware that suffering and death awaited us; but also knowing that we were giving our lives for the cause of the revolution, for the working class, for the workers' rule. We were going out to die in the common cause.

We ran out, one after the other, as silent as shadows. But the Whites soon discovered us and the first shots were fired, words of command sounded,

the French and British warships swung their search-lights around and opened a heavy fire.

Shells began to explode about us. We moved on, bending and stumbling, shells bursting in front on the very spot for which we were headed.

We felt lost amid the general uproar and blinding flashes; but, save for our wounded and killed, we succeeded in breaking through to the Vergopolesk cliffs.

There we met a detachment of forty men under the command of Lagutin. As we counted our numbers, we found we were still over two hundred strong.

At eleven o'clock on the night of May 22, we got orders to advance upon the town.

The night was calm and blue, the air full of the scent of spring grass, the sickle of the moon hung over our heads and the bright stars twinkled. We marched intently; there was no sound save the swish of young wheat and rye against our clothes as we went through the dewy night.

Near the village we turned to the left. A White machine-gun suddenly rattled behind us, firing in an unknown direction. The Whites had recently taken to placing hidden posts with machine-guns on all the road crossings. We stopped dead in the middle of a wheat field; simultaneously a mounted White patrol appeared on the edge of the forest. Happily they did not notice us. We turned more to the left and crawled on. Complete silence reigned around us. Everything was still asleep. Sleepy birds now and then started up from under our feet.

We reached Katerlez village, where we left Comrade Kharin and a few other comrades to prepare the inhabitants of that large village and rouse them to revolt.

By dawn we reached the first street, which still slept shrouded in gray twilight. A joyous shiver ran over our bodies. We passed safely through the village without stopping, inhaling the intoxicating smell of flowering acacia

trees, feeling as if we were born anew in some fairyland. Even our arms and legs had stopped aching,* our exhaustion and pain had gone.

Our two hundred men had orders to create a panic in the town at all costs. Under cover of it, we were to occupy the main positions of the Whites — the station, jetty, telegraph and other spots. We were to draw the working masses into the movement, seize the Pullman armored train, take it to the Ajimushkai quarries, scatter the Whites, set the rest of our comrades in the quarry free and cut off the way to the fortress.

We stopped in the town chuchyrd and divided into several groups.

One of them, commanded by Vassily Denissov, got orders to march to the big jetty of Kerch port, take possession of the piece of artillery posted there and, if possible, capture one of the warships and then smash all the White posts in the port.

The second group, led by the anarchist Tatarinov, was ordered to occupy the station, take the armored train and, with it, occupy the whole railway line which circles round the town and leads to Ajimushkai and the fortress, to break the siege of Ajimushkai quarries, to free the partisans and to fire on the Whites if they attempted to leave the fortress.

The third group, under the command of Dmitry Kossenko, which included our scout detachment, was to march on the town to capture the postal telegraph building, the quarters of the staff, the secret research department and the secret service.

All three detachments marched at dawn. I went with Denissov to the port.

It was still very early and everything slept, the streets were perfectly empty but, before we reached the jetty, we heard the sound of explosions on our right and saw volumes of purple smoke rising in that direction. That was Kossenko's group, in the center of the town, already raiding the police quarters and the secret research department.

We heard the rattle of machine-guns and voices shouting: "Hurrah!"

"A bit early," said someone. "We'll not have time to reach the jetty."

We marched through Karantin Street, calculating that this was the easiest way to reach the middle of the jetty. The end of the street and the whole jetty were crowded with carts and horses to such an extent that it was difficult to get through them. But this helped us to reach the lower end of the jetty unnoticed.

The baggage trains loomed vaguely out of the semi-darkness and we heard the horses snorting and drivers yawning.

The sea gleamed on our right and left, searchlights now and then out through the semi-darkness, the shafts of light joining and crossing each other. Large stacks of pressed hay were heaped in the middle of the jetty. Steamers, torpedo-boats and gunboats were moored to the jetty and the hiss of steam could be heard.

At the sound of firing everything on the jetty came to life. A horn sounded the alarm; the warships began to signal each other. The Whites on the jetty took us for their own men, for we knew their password. They followed us, without understanding what was the matter. We heard bombs exploding all over the town, machine-guns rattling, rifle fire and the stamp of horses' hoofs as the White cavalry galloped about the town. The explosions in Constantine Street, at the foot of Midridat mountain, made great columns of flames.

In the noise and panic we reached the middle of the jetty and suddenly shouted.

"Comrades, sailors! The Bolsheviks have entered the town! Take possession of the ships, join the workers, arrest your chiefs, turn the ships' guns against the enemies of the revolution!"

A dreadful hub-bub arose on the jetty, the roar of a thousand voices, random shots, savage yells and oaths.

The horses reared, dragging the carts along in a tangle of wheels, adding their neighs and screams to the general uproar. They reared in the very

midst of the crowded carts, entangled in their traces, and in their panic fell into the sea dragging the carts after them, floundering in the water and drowning.

The men fired at random, unable to tell friends from enemies in the panic. Machine-guns on board the ships and in the baggage trains kept up a furious fire; all sounds merged into one continual uproar, in which the groans and cries of wounded men and horses mingled with yells of hatred and words of command that came from goodness knows where.

The steamers signaled each other as they moved out to sea. The crews did not join us and all the ships fired at us.

We searched among the carts and hay stacks, looking for the piece of artillery which, unfortunately, we didn't find. We could not take possession, of the torpedo-boat without the assistance of the crew and so, after destroying the White fortifications and scattering their sentries, we began to retreat into the center of the town to join our other sections. We were met on the way by a detachment of Whites which lay in ambush in Karantin Street and tried to cut us off. But we opened fire with the machine-guns we had left on guard at the gates of the jetty and rapidly scattered them.

Near Messaksudy's tobacco factory, at the end of Karantin Street, we joined another group of partisans and marched with them along Stroganovsky Street.

Another fierce battle took place here which lasted over an hour. The Whites did not advance; they posted their machine-guns on the roofs and in windows and swept the streets with shot which struck sparks out of the stones and ricocheted.

We kept near the walls, hiding behind gates and corners.

"Turn off to the left," shouted Denissov.

We went into the yards where the Whites were quartered, arrested Cossacks and officers and, leading them out into the streets, shot them. But on Jews' Street which we had to cross, shots were again showered at us from the

roofs. We could move neither forward nor back, being fired upon from all sides.

The partisans kept saying: "Cut off! We're cut off! Where shall we go?" But in spite of the heavy fire, we succeeded in getting through and even taking some of the wounded with us. Our machine-gun was smashed during the battle and we abandoned it.

Vassily Denissov was then wounded in the neck and hips. He called me to his side and asked:

"Are you safe, Vanya? Not wounded?"

"No," I answered. "They didn't get me."

"All right then. I hand the command over to you; lead the men to join Comrade Kossenko.*

1) * Denissov's further fate is not known. He was lost. The Whites arrested his brother, Gregory, in Feodossya, to which town he had escaped, and executed him there.

I took over the command and we marched on to Melek Chesmye river.

The sun was rising. The revolt was gathering to a head. A terrible uproar filled the town, machine-guns continually fired from roofs and church steeples. Military men and civilians ran across the streets under fire.

The effect of that unexpected revolt and fire was extra- ordinary. From the foot of the hill we saw, frightened White officers in their shirts and pants running out of the town, their figures clearly outlined against the bright green of the orchards. They ran helter-skelter without knowing whither.

We were approaching the center of the revolt, each of us carrying a number of rifles, bombs and hand grenades. The heavy stamp of feet mingled with the clash of arms and the loud, husky voices of partisans shouting:

"Comrades, workmen! The town is in revolt, the Reds are here! join us! Rise up to the assistance of the Soviets, the workers' rule!"

From time to time workmen and sailors ran out and took rifles from us. They embraced us in an access of joy.

We joined Comrade Kossenko at last. Half the town was already occupied by the partisans. The whole of Constantine Street was overcrowded with workmen who had joined them (mostly stevedores and seamen). There were also adolescents, old men and women, all fired with revolutionary enthusiasm.

The armored train which we had not captured, moved slowly up and down the railway line to Ajimushkai and back, in case reinforcements should arrive from the village or more partisans come out of Ajimushkai quarries.

"Comrades, comrades! They are coming!" partisans began to shout in loud and joyful voices. "Here they are, a whole army of them. Hurrah! We'll soon have reinforcements."

The peasants of Kateregyez village were coming. They were armed at haphazard with guns, pitchforks, axes.

They marched on the town in a motley crowd, to the assistance of the exhausted partisan's. Everybody's eyes were focused on that moving crowd of peasants. But we were burdened with anxiety lest the Whites send an armored train against them. That premonition was right. The Pullman fired a volley from its three-inch guns and immediately after, the Whites moved their infantry against the peasants.

A machine-gun sprayed them from some unknown direction.

The peasants, fired on from all sides, took to sudden flight.

By eleven o'clock things had become most difficult for us. The armored train had not been taken, Tatarinov having been badly defeated near the station. Some militant comrades gathered in the house which served as headquarters for the revolt, to discuss the situation. Two members of the secret town organizations, Comrades Kreps and Kelner, also came in.

Comrade Kreps tried to make things clear to us, to save the partisans unexpected shocks.

"The situation," he said, "is difficult. Part of the workmen have been misled by the Mensheviks and have not joined in the revolt. There is a revolutionary movement in progress on the French warships. The Party organization attached great importance to propaganda among the French sailors. The result, as you know, is that not a single shot was fired within the last few days from the French ships, for the sailors refused to shoot at the partisans. There were five sailors on board through whom we did our work. They opposed the ships' officers and were the leaders of the sailors. But yesterday these five steadfast comrades disappeared, no one knows where. We believe they have been abducted. The despotism of the interventionists has grown and we must expect that they will force the remaining sailors, who have lost their direct revolutionary leaders, to shoot at us."

"So it's a lost cause?" groaned some of the men.

Comrade Kreps, usually so cool and collected, grew angrily red. His dark eyes filled with hatred.

"That's a lie!" he shouted, striking his fist on the table.

And at that moment the first French shell exploded in the middle of the street. The house shook and the windows broke with a crash.

"That's a lie, comrades! This is the last bloody spot of the White pack. The revolution moves stubbornly and unavoidably forward, as the day against the night. We must hold out until the evening, try to take the fortress during the night and we shall get the power into our hands. We must, if necessary, die on the barricades, to the last man, but not give in!"

"Forward! Hurrah!" roared the partisans again.

"If we don't hold out today," went on Comrade Kreps, "those who remain alive must not give up their arms, nor lose touch with each other. We shall

definitely undermine the rotten morale of these hangmen with the aid of our secret organizations. Onwards, comrades!"

"Long live the Revolution!"

"Death to the hangmen!"

Shouting, we all rushed into the battle again under showers of bullets.

At noon the sun was blazing fiercely. A cavalry detachment galloped in the direction of the town.

We watched them expectantly, hoping this was Red cavalry coming to the assistance of the insurgents and that the White front was broken.

But, approaching the Whites, the cavalry stopped and the riders dismounted.

"That's not the Reds, comrades. They have retreated from the Crimea to the north," said a badly wounded man in our line. "We've just heard it from a reliable source."

Nobody would believe it. Everyone tried to keep up hope; but it was clear to us that the iron ring had closed round us.

"Death! Annihilation!" were the words we read in each other's eyes.

The workers' detachments began rapidly to move their small forces, building barricades for the coming battle.

The Whites began a general attack against the town.

"It's the real thing coming now, the last decisive battle," said a ragged partisan from the quarries whose head and arm were bandaged.

The men moved hurriedly about, getting ready for the battle, cleaning their rifles, posting their machine-guns in the shadow of walls.

The first big gun spoke.

Someone shouted: "That's the signal, comrades!"

The shell fell into a large house on Verkhnemitridat Street and set it on fire. We heard the tinkle of broken window glass.

Women, children and old people ran to and fro, screaming.

"They're quite close, at the foot of the mountain," said a partisan lying next to me.

The Whites advanced with loud and jubilant shouts.

Machine-guns rattled without interruption. The bullets raised little clouds of dust on the roofs and pavements.

The shells fell one after the other, destroying the little cottages of the workers' quarter.

The Whites were already occupying Vorontsov Street and coming up to the Winter Theater and our main positions in Constantine and Verkhnemitridat Streets and the lower part of the town. White soldiers, cadets and officers made a fierce onslaught, pouring shot all over the streets.

Our orderlies, and the women who helped to carry off the wounded and dress their injuries, worked where the battle was raging. Even regular nurses with red crosses on their uniforms had appeared from somewhere and carried the wounded off to Constantine Street. Some were taken into the houses, some laid on the pavement. The dead were placed side by side out in the street.

We retreated with the workers who had joined us, hiding in gateways and behind corners, entrenching ourselves on Mitridat mountain.

The air in the town was stifling, promising thunder; the sky overclouded. The sea gleamed evilly below. The warships poured forth smoke as they got ready to put out to sea.

And immediately the roar of cannon rolled over Kerch. The crows flew up with loud frightened cawing. Shell after shell struck against Mitridat

mountain and the outskirts of the town. Heavy shells, fired from the ships, exploded in our neighborhood.

It was difficult for us to hold out against that terrific fire. Under cover of it the Whites assailed us from all sides. Some fell under our shots, some were killed by their own shrapnel. The bullets dug and scooped the ground, raising small clouds of dust; they continually hissed over our heads.

We abandoned our positions under the fierce onslaught and retreated to the outskirts of the town, entrenching ourselves in a big old cemetery; after a time, all the partisans from Constantine Street, which was the center of the revolt, joined us.

We felt that the end had come. Heavy machine-gun and rifle fire poured continuously upon us; shrapnel whistled monotonously; the whine of the falling shells ended in abrupt crashes as they landed, crashes as of big locomotives hitting a wall, followed by a tornado of explosion and fury; they smashed the crosses and burst open the burial vaults. The French and English allies of the White generals certainly played havoc with the dead in that cemetery.

Roofs fell in and walls collapsed in the workers' quarters, burying whole families under the ruins.

By evening we were entirely beaten and the few score of us who remained alive scattered in all directions. The battle was ended. Those who were able ran away, abandoning the dead and wounded. Our only thought was to save our lives, since it was impossible for us to hold out any longer. Cossacks, Chechentsy and officers attacked us everywhere. The Whites, exultant and savage, rushed into the cottages, along the roofs, through orchards and sheds, seeking partisans and people who had taken part in the revolt. They broke into lodgings. The wild Chechentsy hacked whole families to death on suspicion.

They cut down children, old women, old men, even babies.

The whole town ran with blood, corpses lay about in heaps.

Nobody was allowed to take the bodies away. The inhabitants were forbidden to come out in the streets.

The clergy of Kerch, the generals and officers offered up prayers and thanksgivings for their victory. They walked in procession through the streets, carrying ikons and banners and singing the national anthem as they strode over the dead bodies of workers and peasants. From time to time the procession stopped and the clergyman, who had shot at us with his own godly hand from his church steeple, preached sermons on the devilry of bolshevik evil.

Dead bodies hung from the trees which lined the streets, while pools of blood dried on the pavement. The White officers and the wild Chechentsy mocked the bodies, hacking at them with their swords and digging their bayonets into the cold flesh.

White terrorism reached its peak. Over fifteen hundred people were killed in the course of two days. The town was saturated with blood. People were shot everywhere. Squads of Whites searched the plains, looking for escaped partisans in the wheat and rye and grass.

The dead bodies of partisans, workers and peasants were so numerous that they filled four common graves — in Ajimushkai, in Stary-Karantin, near Petrovsk barracks and in the cemetery.

The fate of our comrades who remained in Ajimushkai quarries was as follows:

After we had gone they remained for a few more days in the quarries. The Whites walled them in entirely. Utter despair reigned in the galleries and caves. The villagers demanded that the staff surrender, but the latter did not agree.

Seeing that the position was hopeless the partisans, both sick and wounded, cut a hole in the wall of one of the galleries. They dug with knives, bayonets and with their bare hands. The members of the staff ordered the villagers to wait until the partisans had left and then to tie a white rag on the end of a bayonet and signal the Whites that they wished to surrender. The

partisans then crawled out into the plain through the hole they had made and scattered in various directions — in the catacombs of the town, in the steppes, along the shores and among the cliffs of the Azov and Black Seas.

The Red Partisans are a shining glory of the workers' revolution. They grievously afflicted the Whites, harried and hampered them, gave vital help to the Red Army. Many died. Many times they seemed doomed, and went out to die. Fighting consciously for the workers' triumph, they endured their agonies knowing that the revolution would not die. That the world must be set free.

About the Author

Ivan Ovcharenko

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Tidbits

In 1919, following the departure of the German troops, red partisan detachments arrived in the Kerch district. The road from Staryy Karantin to Kamysh-Burun became the site of attacks on passers-by. At the end of March (according to the old-style calendar) of 1919, Aleksandr Il'ich Glazunov was captured by the partisans along with two officers on the road, when they were all riding together, apparently heading to his villa. Soon after, the officers were shot. The partisans, trying to establish friendly relations with the local intelligentsia, decided to keep Aleksandr Il'ich Glazunov alive.

One of the partisans, Ivan Ovcharenko, writes in his memories of the affairs of his detachment: “He was treated very politely. They made him a bed of straw, fed him with eggs, milk, butter, in a word, made it clear in every possible way that no bandits gathered in the rocks ... but conscious revolutionaries ...”. Glazunov was “offered” “to support the detachment financially”. Taking this opportunity, Glazunov wrote a note to his wife.

Having received this unexpected message (probably, she did not longer hope to see him alive), she collected urgently—within a few hours—12 thousand roubles, borrowing it under any pretext in order to free her husband.

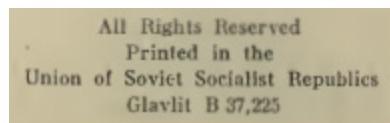
Here it needs to be mentioned that during the years 1917 to 1920, the political and military situation on the Crimea peninsula was chaotic and unstable due to the Russian Civil War.

Many people left Crimea. A.I. Glazunov fled in 1921, first to Constantinople and soon after to Prague.

About Glavlit

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The Main Directorate for Literary and Publishing Affairs (Glavnoe Upravlenie po Delam Literatury i Izdatelstv), known as Glavlit, was the state agency responsible for the censorship of printed materials in the Soviet Union. Although print was its main focus, it sometimes supervised the censorship of other media, including radio, television, theater, and film. Glavlit was created in 1922 to replace a network of uncoordinated military and civilian censorship agencies set up after the Bolshevik seizure of power.



The Soviet government reserved the right to prevent the publication of all materials. Glavlit was charged with preventing the publication of economic or military information believed to pose a threat to Soviet security; this included subjects as diverse as grain harvests, inflation, incidence of disease, and the location of military industries. Party and military leaders compiled a list of facts and categories deemed secret.

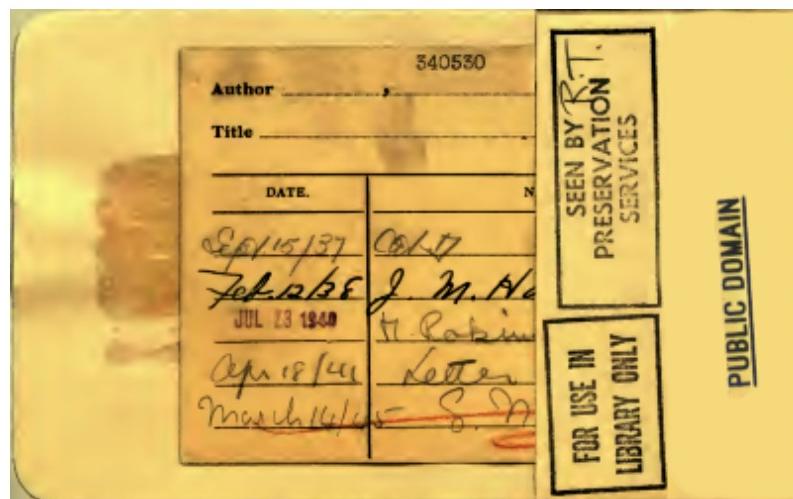
Glavlit was also charged with suppressing any printed materials deemed hostile to the Soviet state or the Communist Party. This ran the gamut from pornography to religious texts to anything that could be construed as critical of the party or state, whether implicitly or explicitly. Individual censors had a fair amount of discretion in this area, and often showed considerable creativity and paranoia in their work. The severity of censorship varied with the political climate. Glavlit was particularly strict in its supervision of the private publishers allowed to operate between 1921 and 1929.

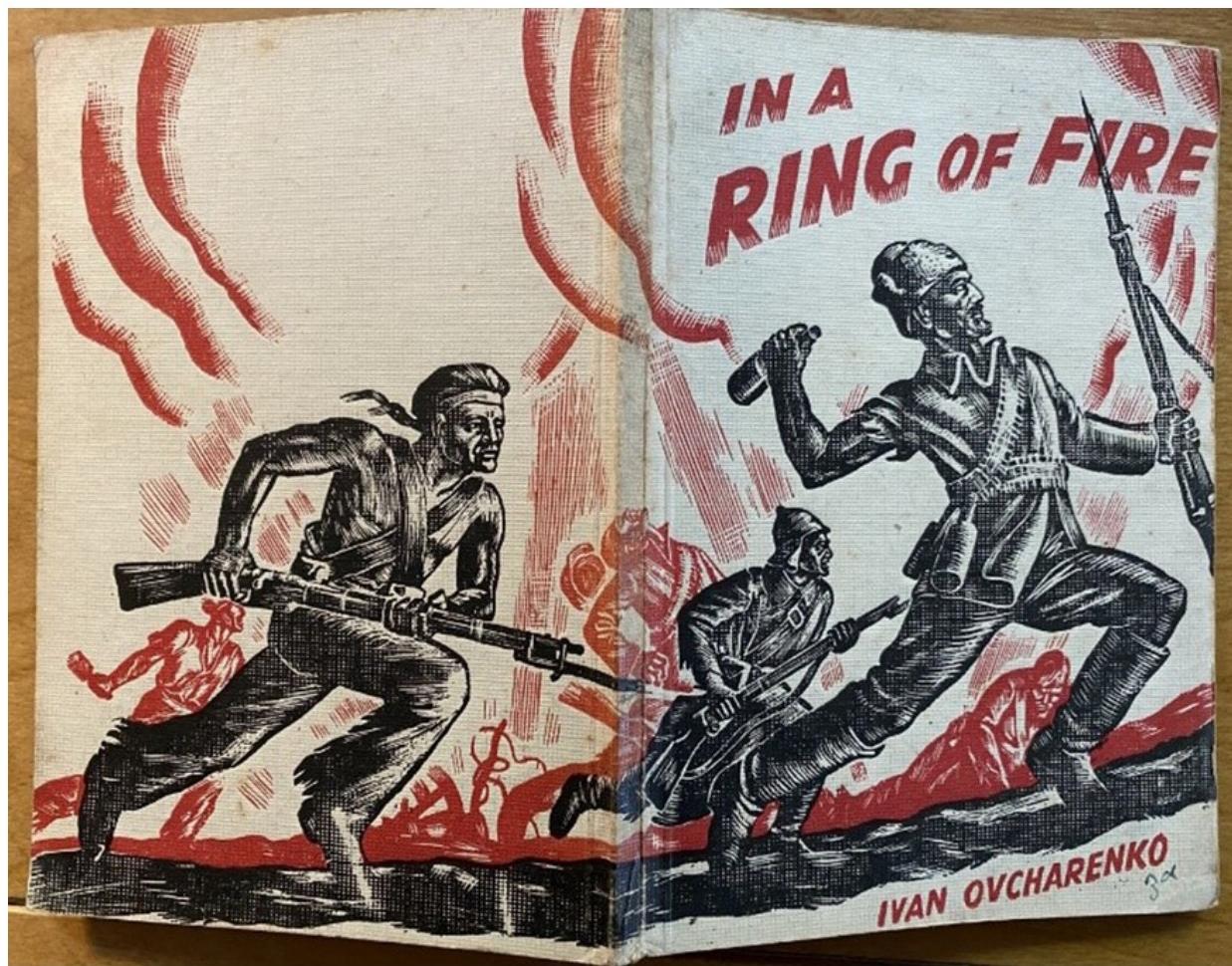
All printing and publishing in the Soviet Union was subject to prepublication censorship. Everything from newspapers to books to ephemera, such as posters, note pads, and theater tickets, required the

approval of a Glavlit official before it could be published; violation of this rule was a serious criminal offense.

Glavlit had several secondary functions, including the censorship of foreign literature imported to the Soviet Union. It also took part in purging materials associated with "enemies of the people" from libraries, bookstores, and museums.

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Ivan Ovcharenko In a Ring of Fire. Cover design by Cliff Rowe 1933

IN A RING OF FIRE

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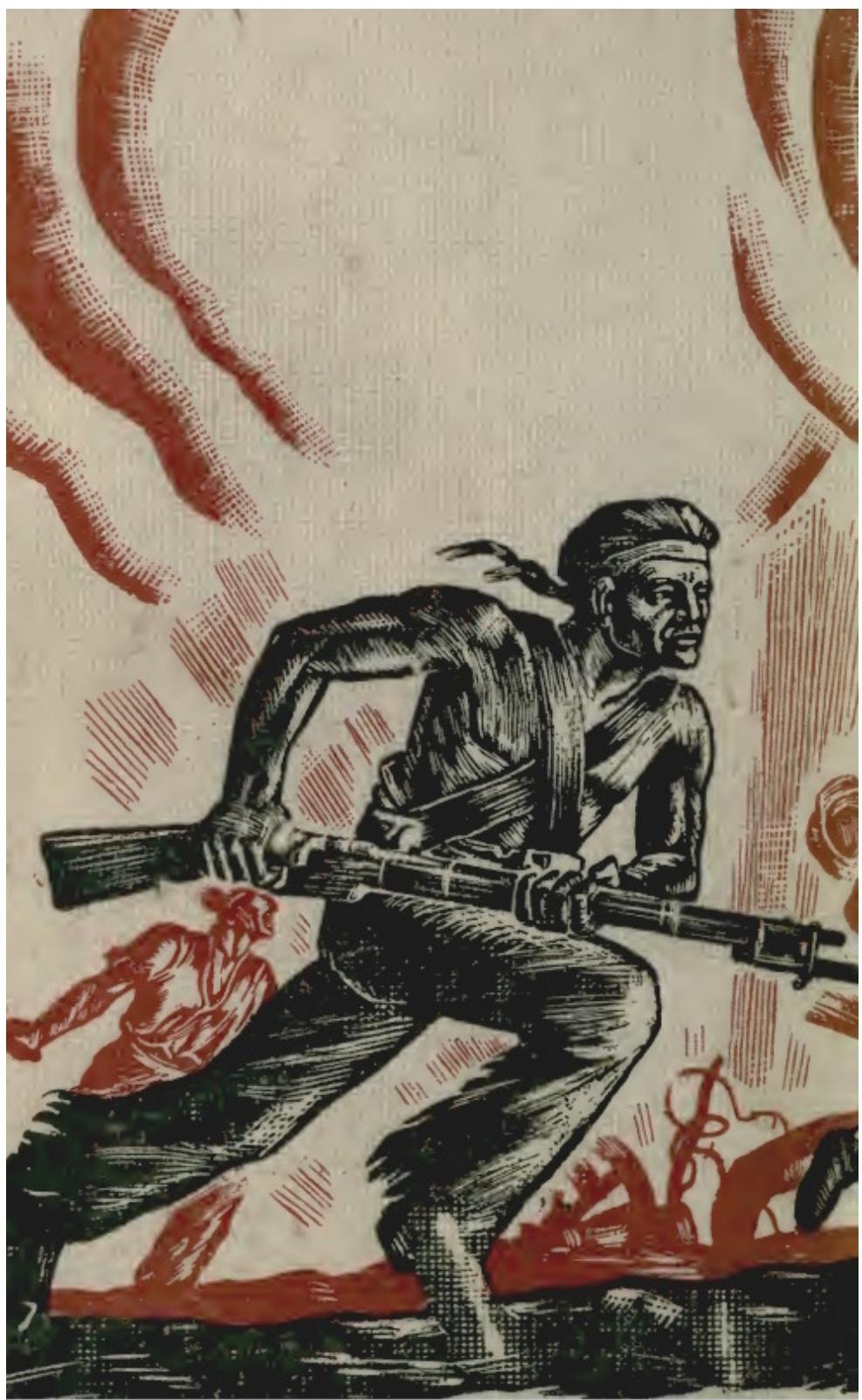


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About the Author

About Glavlit

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